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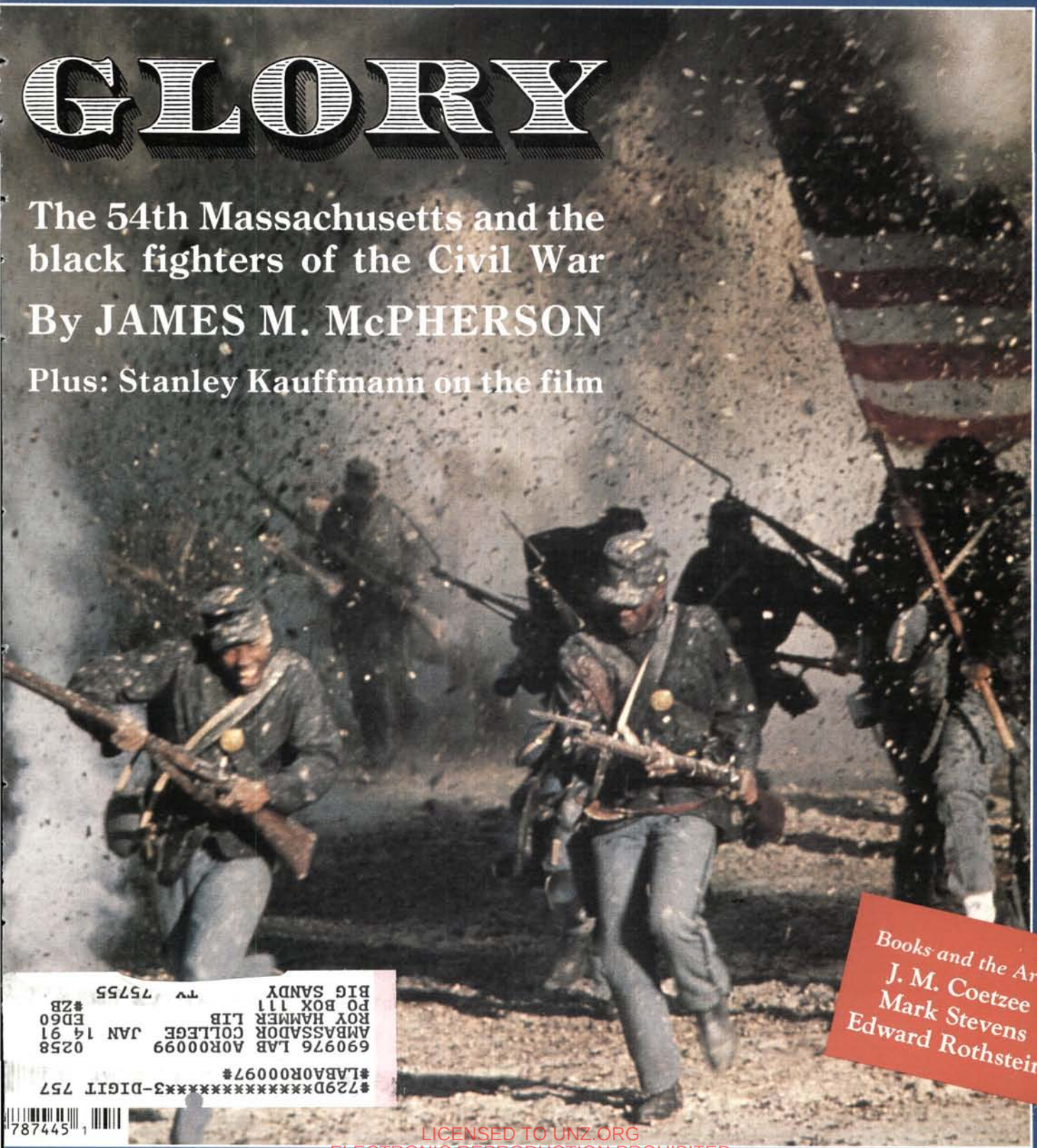

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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

JANUARY 8 & 15, 1990

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FROM WASHINGTON

A liberal tax cut

Happy New Year and read my lips: as of January 1, your taxes just went up. For the 15th time in 27 years, the new year has brought an increase in the FICA payroll tax, which supposedly finances Social Security and Medicare. This time the tax rate rose from 7.51 percent to 7.65 percent. Including the employer's matching share, the basic FICA tax rate of 15.3 percent is now higher than the basic income tax rate of 15 percent. The top wage on which FICA is collected also went up, from $48,000 to $51,300. So the maximum annual FICA contribution rose from $3,604.80 to $3,924.45—or $7,848.90, including the employer's share. That's a hike of almost nine percent.

While Washington debates whether a proposed $275 million excise levy on sales of recreational vehicles violates President Bush's pledge of no new taxes, the FICA adjustment amounts to a quiet tax increase of almost $15 billion. Since 1978—the year of the first capital gains reduction that heralded the era of tax cuts for the well-to-do—FICA tax rates have risen by 30 percent. Most of this increase is the result of a "reform" signed with a flourish by Mr. Tax Cut himself, President Reagan, in 1983. In fiscal 1990 FICA is projected to bring in $389 billion—four-fifths as much as the individual income tax. For most taxpayers, FICA (including the employer's share) now takes more money than the income tax.

It would be hard to design a tax more unfair than FICA. Unlike the income tax, it has only one rate and no deductions or exemptions. A minimum-wage worker pays the same share of income as someone making $50,000 a year. Someone making $60,000 pays a smaller share, because the tax stops at $51,300. And someone whose income is from dividends, interest, and capital gains pays nothing at all, since the tax applies only to wages.

The FICA tax looks no better from the supply-side point of view. It is a more direct disincentive to enterprise and employment than the much-abused capital gains tax. The entrepreneur—o! blessed individual—who is thinking of starting a company may have to pay a capital gains tax, someday, if the company prospers and she sells her shares. But she must pay FICA on her payroll from day one whether she prospers or not. The income tax doesn't prevent the creation of jobs for the very poor, or of entry-level jobs for the young, because low-wage workers pay no income tax. But FICA means that a job must be worth 15 percent more to an employer than it is to a potential employee before anyone gets hired. In that respect it is more insidious than the much-abused minimum wage.

In his 1991 budget proposal, due January 22, President Bush will reintroduce his proposed capital gains tax cut, which unexpectedly got stymied last fall. In the previous go-round, the Democrats countered with a complicated proposal to expand Individual Retirement Accounts, which were curtailed in the 1986 tax reform. This is a dubious idea both on distributional grounds (more affluent people than poor people have IRAs) and as seen from the supply side (the effect on saving and investment is unclear).

A wiser and bolder move would be to propose a "supply-side tax cut for working people": a large slice in the FICA levy. A 40 percent cut in the worker's share of FICA (a figure I've chosen for a reason) would be worth $765 to a person earning $25,000 a year—$1,530 to a working couple making $25,000 each. It seems to me this would go down quite well compared with Bush's capital gains cut, which would give an average saving of $25,000 a year to the two or three percent of Americans making over $200,000 a year and nothing at all to most people making $25,000 total.

The cost? About $75 billion in lost revenues. As it happens, that is the size of the projected Social Security surplus for 1991: the amount by which revenues will exceed expenses. This surplus is supposed to be going into a kitty to finance the retirement of the baby boomers in the next century. But the kitty is a myth. The money is being used to finance today's government expenses. It now appears, for example, that the Bush Administration may be able to reach 1991's Gramm-Rudman deficit target of $64 billion with only normal amounts of fraudulent accounting. But without that $75 billion, the deficit would be more than double.

There is no way society as a whole can save money for its future retirement. The resources retirees consume in the year 2025 will have to be produced in the year 2025 or thereabouts. All we can do now is take steps to increase our productive capacity in 2025. That way, retirees' claims on 2025's resources needn't reduce the claims of current workers. If the Social Security surplus was increasing productive investment—even indirectly, by reducing the government's demand for credit—it would be achieving that purpose. But it clearly isn't. Instead, it is enabling the government to avoid fiscal reality.

By the mid-1990s the annual surplus will be running well over $100 billion, all going into government IOUs. When it is time to draw down the kitty, taxes will have to be raised to pay off the IOUs. Either that or the promise to retirees will have to be reneged upon. The situation will be exactly the same as if the kitty didn't exist and taxes had to be raised to pay retirement benefits directly. With this difference: for a generation, the government will have been financed in large part by a terribly unfair and job-destroying tax.

Of course, if you cut FICA taxes by $75 billion, you still need to find another $75 billion, or you will only have made matters even worse for the future. The "peace dividend"? It's already been spent several times over on the nation's op-ed pages. So let's look elsewhere.

An across-the-board ten percent income tax surcharge would almost do it, and would leave 19 out of 20 families better off (which gives you some idea of how unfair the FICA tax is). Or we can start hitting the fiscal wish list. Every revenue buff's got one. Mine includes 85 percent taxation of Social Security benefits (up from 50 percent above a certain income floor now), which would bring in an amazing $20 billion a year. The case is familiar: today's retirees are getting a far better deal than tomorrow's retirees can ever hope for, and making benefits taxable won't hurt the poor since the poor pay no income tax.

Capital gains currently escape tax completely when property is passed on at death; taxing capital gains at death would bring in $5 billion a year. Keeping the top tax rate at 33 percent for very high incomes, instead of illogically letting it drop back to 28 percent, would bring in $10 billion. A 40 cent gasoline tax would bring in a quick $40 billion, reduce energy consumption and the greenhouse effect, and still leave us with just about the cheapest gas in the world. Voila! $75 billion.

Responsible people may be thinking it wouldn't be a bad idea to do some of these things without squandering the money on a tax cut. But Ronald Reagan and George Bush have relieved the Democrats of any obligation to be responsible in fiscal matters. The past decade has not been one of tax cuts. It has been one of replacing taxes on high incomes and capital with taxes on low-income workers: a fraud Democrats have sleepwalked right into, hypnotized by Social Security. Rectifying the abuse without actually increasing the deficit is as responsible as anyone reasonably needs to be.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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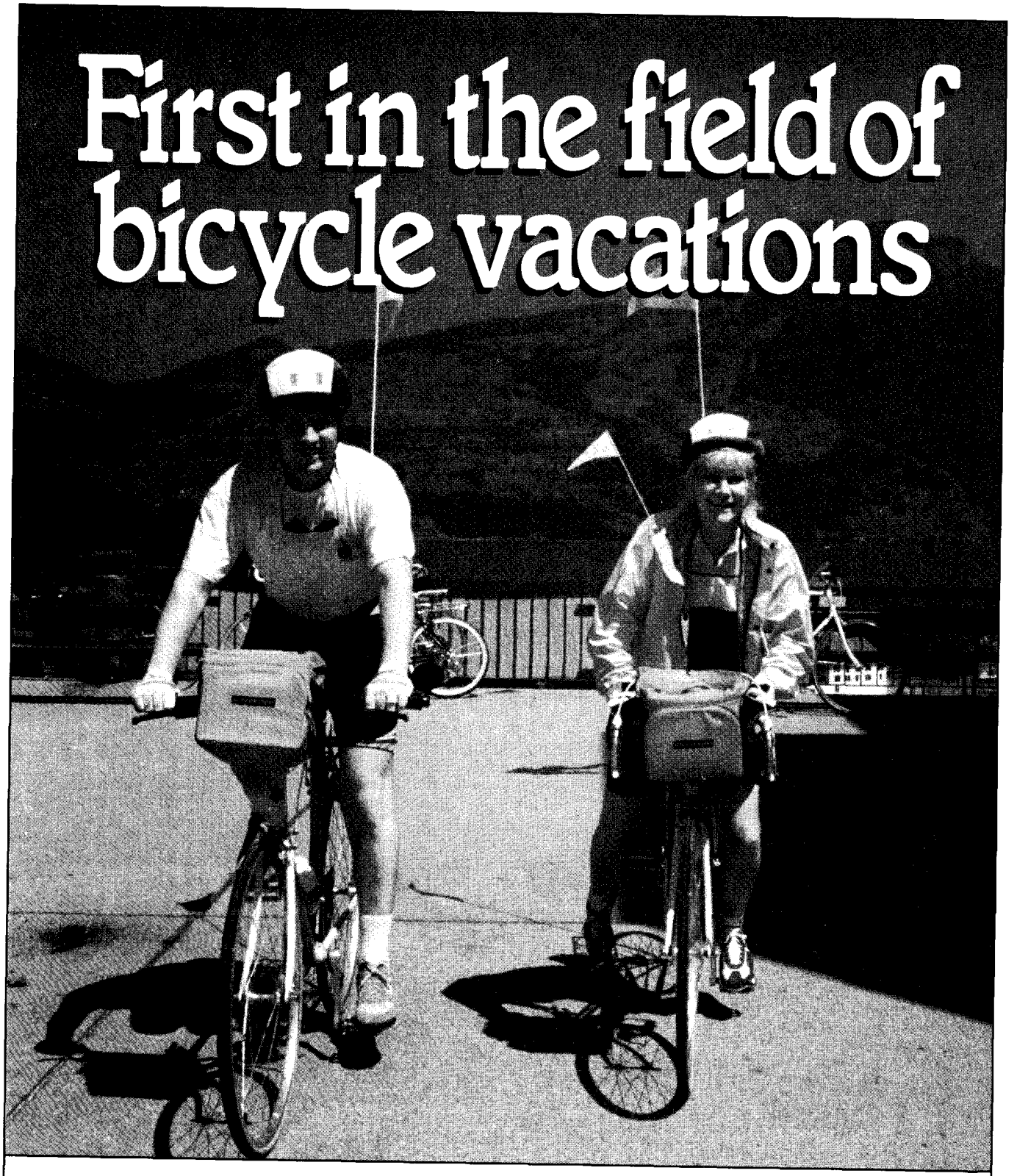

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CORRESPONDENCE

Narcolonialism

To the editors:

Though Tina Rosenberg is brilliant on the native habitat of the cocaine monster ("The Kingdom of Cocaine," November 27), she fails to build a better monstertrap: after the United States builds up the Colombian economy in order to wean it away from cocaine, what happens when the Kingdom of Cocaine moves to Brazil, to India, to Nigeria? Is the United States infinitely capable of subsidizing mythic, unnamed, but vastly profitable substitute crops—and also providing a market for same—so that the entire Third World will want to cry no to cocaine? Dream on. Reality is that Washington must make a difficult decision: either declare all-out domestic war against coke (and by extension all other drugs), or decide that Americans just love hard drugs the same way they just love hard liquor, and let 'em have it.

Not only is Washington powerless to contest this epidemic of hedonism, why should it? Wasn't this question answered by the repeal of (alcohol) prohibition? If the issue is drug-related violence, nothing will do as much to control it in the United States as letting those who want cocaine have it at the lowest possible price, a price uninflated by artificial limits on supply.

The United States can't buy enough pretty carnations to keep every Third World economy from producing cocaine; at home Washington can't stop people from consuming the stuff without turning the country into one large gulag. Those of us who neither produce, sell, nor buy these drugs should stop trying to make everyone just like us. Narcolonialism is not a better monstertrap. It's simply another dumb wish never to be fulfilled.

HESH KESTIN
Karkur, Israel

History, Nicaragua-style

To the editors:

Hendrik Hertzberg's "Civics, Nicaragua-style" (December 25) concludes, in part, "Decades of dictatorship and another of war and revolutionary rapture have left the country with a devastated economy and a wounded political culture." For Hertzberg, Nicaraguan history begins with Anastasio Somoza Garcia's seizure of power in 1936. In fact, political chaos, authoritarianism, exploitation, and bloodshed characterize Nicaragua's history going back to independence in 1821 and beyond, to the colonial period. As an example, Guanacaste province seceded from Nicaragua in 1824 and annexed itself to Costa Rica because, as a Nicaraguan historian observes, "On the Costa Rican side [they] would enjoy the peace and tranquility that the constant anarchy [of Nicaragua] denied them." An American scholar and diplomat, John L. Stephens, visited Nicaragua in 1840, was shocked by the cruelty, callousness, and disorganization he saw, and noted in his journal, "The resources of this distracted country are incalculable. Peace and industry would open fountains which would overflow with wealth."

To speak of a "wounded political culture" implies that a healthy political culture once existed. That is simply untrue.

LAWRENCE E. HARRISON
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Preserving perversity

To the editors:

As the villainous translator of S. Y. Agnon's *Shira*, I am not alone in disputing Hillel Halkin's dictum that "the only way to be faithful to [Agnon's] genius is to be free with it" ("Sexual Perversity in Jerusalem," November 20). In sticking as closely as I could to the words of the text, I wanted to share that elusive affect conveyed through Agnon's highly personal, often lyric appropriation of rabbinic syntax and vocabulary. Reducing this text to language that is merely credible or familiar when dealing with a writer whose scope is so grand would seem to defeat the enterprise.

As for Halkin's specific objections: though the phrase "tent dweller" makes no attempt to convey the rabbinic usage contained in the Hebrew, it aims to let the reader know, through a shift in modality, that Dr. Manfred Herbst's sense of himself is charged with other meanings. This device is intrinsic to Agnon's prose. The decision to follow the austerity of Agnon's words, rather than spell out Herbst's actions, is not necessarily "slavish literalism." In this case it conveys the working of Herbst's mind to refer to "what transpired between him and her," though we know they "had sex." The indirection is Agnon's, and a translator who prefers another mode would do better to write his/her own text. I hoped to convey Agnon's ability to embody that special realm where thought and feeling intersect. It may, after all, be Halkin who descends to the level of literalism, dismissing this sort of language as "a device," describing this part of the drama as "a bedroom scene" in which Herbst and Shira are "a man and a woman who are about to jump into bed," transposing the Herbst household in Baka into a "suburban family."

ZEVA SHAPIRO
New York, New York

More liberal cynicism

To the editors:

David Hamilton, in his attack on John Silber's project for the revitalization of Chelsea's schools ("Silber Bullet, December 4), seems to think that education in America is an issue that must be defined along the battle lines of conservative vs. liberal. Politics does play a disturbingly prominent role in "The Great Debate" over education. But U.S. school systems are faced with high dropout rates, appalling SAT statistics, and a growing deficit of teacher talent, and they have run out of solutions. In such a climate, those with innovative ideas must be brought to the forefront of this struggle, their programs judged by their merits and the results they bring to our beleaguered schools. In this context, Hamilton's apparent relish at the prospect of the demise of Boston University's project and the subsequent vindication of some liberal platform seems a Pyrrhic victory indeed.

RUSTY BARBER
Alexandria, Virginia

Adam Smith run amok

To the editors:

TRB asserts that the classical theory of free trade should be applied to U.S.-Japan trade relations ("Crazy but harmless," December 11). So what, he asks, if the Japanese choose to sacrifice consumption in order to protect their industries at home and gain competitive advantages abroad? We "rational" Westerners should accept the free gifts of subsidized exports, since maximizing consumption is the only valid goal of economic policy.

This naive Adam Smithian view is no longer supported by economic theory. In a world characterized by economies of scale, imperfect markets, and technological learning effects, trade barriers and industrial policies can increase one nation's income at the expense of its trading partners. A laissez-faire response to Japanese trade policy will allow our productive base to erode, ultimately undermining our ability to consume.

TRB's argument that budget deficit reduction is the only way to lower the trade deficit with Japan is both wrong and dangerous. Cutting the U.S. federal budget deficit, by itself, would reduce our imports, but only by reducing U.S. demand, thus causing employment and

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JANUARY 8 & 15, 1990

SAKHAROV

Mikhail Gorbachev didn't imagine, when he dismissed Andrei Sakharov from the podium of the Congress of People's Deputies with a Brezhnevite wave of his hand, that Sakharov would go home and die. It was typical of Sakharov to embarrass power even in death. His life was the most extraordinary embarrassment of power in our time.

"I am not a professional politician," Sakharov wrote in exile in Gorky, in March 1981. "Perhaps that is why I am always bothered by questions concerning the usefulness and eventual results of my actions. I am inclined to believe that moral criteria in combination with unrestricted inquiry provide the only possible compass for these complex and contradictory problems. I shall refrain from predictions, but today as always I believe in the power of reason and the human spirit." Like all of Sakharov's sentences, those sentences feel classical. Their simplicity is the result of a preternatural clarity, a preternatural constancy. They sound all of Sakharov's—and Milton's, and Locke's, and Jefferson's, and Mill's, and Gandhi's, and Einstein's, and King's—themes. The indifference to consequences; the rejection of force; the absolutism of tolerance; the priority of morality to politics; the faith in truth; the calm of dissent; the confidence in the mind: these were the ideas with which Sakharov opened a gaping hole, a white hole, in the totality of the totalitarians.

Sakharov's prodigious talent for freedom made itself known to the Soviet authorities as early as 1957—just a year after he was awarded the Lenin Prize, and, for the second time, the title Hero of Socialist Labor—when he spoke out, as one of his country's prominent physicists, against nuclear testing. But it was with the publication of "Thoughts on Progress, Peaceful Co-existence, and Intellectual Freedom" in 1968 that the tyrants met their match. Because of that essay, which was widely distributed in samizdat, Sakharov was barred from what the Soviets call "secret work." It was the beginning of a disgraceful persecution. In 1970 he was one of the founders of the Human Rights Committee in Moscow, which began the campaign against psychiatric hospitalization for political reasons and the forcible resettlement of individuals and groups. In 1972 his first interviews with Western journalists appeared in the West—how stirred we too were by his words—and a year later the Soviet press began its decade and a half of vilification. By that time the KGB was animadverting in its own way upon the deviations of Academician Sakharov.

There was a really Galilean quality to Sakharov's dissent. He was introducing into Russia one of the most momentous achievements of Europe: the scientific inspiration of democracy. He always spoke of "scientific methodology and a democratic spirit" in the same breath. He set out to promote the spirit of unfettered inquiry that he imbibed from his scientific milieu—"the fearless weighing of all facts, views, and theories"—into the foundation of a social order. It was, certainly, the ultimate retort to the "scientific socialism" on which the Soviet state was erected. The integrity of the scientist and the integrity of the heretic were, for Sakharov, the

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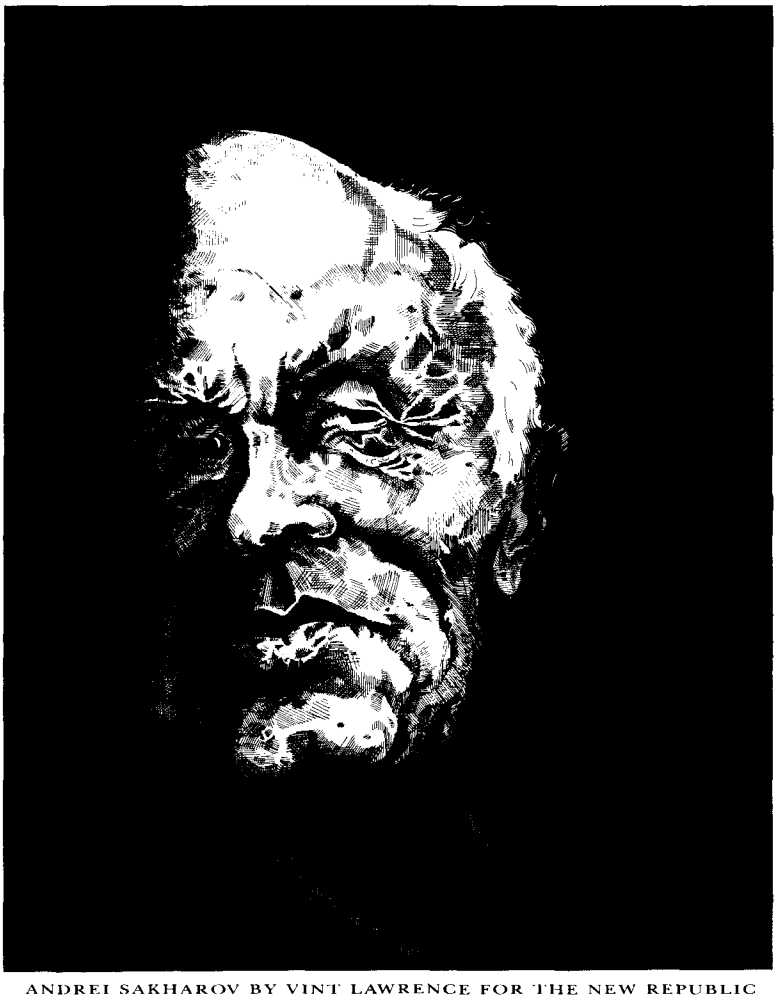
same. And when science betrayed its essential freedom, he also spoke out, as in his important contribution to the discrediting of Lysenkoism, the specious Stalinist science according to which acquired traits may be inherited. (With any luck, though, the Soviet Union will inherit the acquired trait of Sakharovism.)

Nor was that all. There are two answers to Lenin, and neither of them is Gorbachev. One of the answers is Sakharov. The other is Solzhenitsyn. By the early '70s it became clear that Sakharov was a voice not only against Soviet totalitarianism, but also against Russian millenarianism. History will probably record that Sakharov's quarrel with Solzhenitsyn was as fateful for the Soviet Union as Sakharov's quarrel with Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko. As the Soviet Union in the age of *glasnost* loses its identity, as it watches its traditions of this century become rubble, as it searches for a political culture, for a theory of legitimacy, that will secure the break with its Communist past, it will have to make a choice between Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn.



ANDREI SAKHAROV BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The debate between these giants was extraordinary. Rarely has freedom been demanded of power in the name of principles so different. Sakharov recognized Solzhenitsyn's greatness, but repudiated his chauvinism, his irrationalism, his morbidity, his hatred of the West. "I find it difficult," he wrote in 1974,

> to accept Solzhenitsyn's view of Marxism as a "Western" and antireligious doctrine which distorted a healthy Russian line of development. The very classification of ideas as Western or Russian is incomprehensible to me. In my view, a scientific and rational approach to social and natural phenomena is only compatible with a classification of ideas as true or false. . . . Solzhenitsyn argues that our country may not be ready for a democratic system, and that an authoritarian system combined with legality and Orthodoxy cannot be all that bad if Russia managed to conserve its national vitality under such a system right into the 20th century. These assertions of Solzhenitsyn's are alien to my way of thinking. I consider a democratic mode of development the only satisfactory one for any country. The centuries-old abject and servile Russian spirit, combined with suspicion of foreigners, seems to me a tremendous affliction, and not a sign of national vitality. Only democratic institutions can mature the national character so that it is capable of leading a sensible way of life in our ever more complicated world.

In truth, Sakharov, not Solzhenitsyn, was the philosophical innovator. Solzhenitsyn wishes to revive an old dispensation. Sakharov wished to inculcate a new one. This man was living proof of what might be called the spirituality of democracy. He showed that liberalism and the belief in rights strengthens, not slackens, the soul.

He has been often called a prophet, and rightly. But let us not forget that in their time the prophets were not heroes but outcasts; that they were despised as traitors and defeatists; that they were, by the standards of their own societies, moral maniacs. "Forgive us" is the popular refrain in Moscow now, in the wake of Sakharov's death, and the popular feeling of guilt has an ugly basis in reality. Sakharov in Gorky: there was the typical fate of prophets. It is some solace, therefore, to recall that, unlike another prophet who was also consecrated to the end of bondage, Sakharov lived not only to see the promised land, he lived also to set foot in it. With his every step, in fact, its promise gained in reality. One way of describing *glasnost*, after all, is government in the spirit of Sakharov.

He was an absolutist to the end. He died at work on a speech that called for the end of the Communist Party's monopoly of power in the Soviet Union. In the cause of reason, he was not a reasonable man. But the prospects of that cause, even under Gorbachev, are not at all plain. Russia, after all, is not a country with acknowledged liberal traditions. No, that's not quite right. *Before Sakharov*, Russia was not a country with acknowledged liberal traditions. Now, in his legacy, it has a liberal spur. Will it be spurred? •

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PANAMA COCKED HAT

The American military intervention in Panama is only a few hours old as this issue of TNR goes to press, but it is already clear that it will succeed in one of its stated objectives: overthrowing the narcocratic military dictatorship of Manuel Antonio Noriega and replacing it in power with Guillermo Endara, the legitimately elected opposition leader whose 2-to-1 victory in last May's Panamanian presidential election was viciously overturned by Noriega. Whether Noriega himself will be apprehended remains to be seen. But his status is now appropriate to his character: he is no longer a "maximum leader" who is also a thug. He is simply a thug, a fugitive from justice.

The Panamanian people will not be unhappy to see the back of him. Neither will the United States' Latin American friends, whatever ritual objections they feel obliged to lodge. And the Bush Administration is likely to win broad support for this action among the American people and in both parties in Congress. Noriega was a narcotics trafficker, a murderer (he had killed more than 100 members of his own military in the weeks since the failed coup of October 3), and a strangler of democracy. And it was General Noriega, not President Bush, who had declared a "state of war."

Bush came under severe criticism, in these quarters and others, when he failed to act decisively in connection with the October 3 coup. An opportunity was lost to remove Noriega with minimal loss of life. This time the cost is going to be much higher. Noriega deserves his misfortune, but the American soldiers and Panamanian civilians who have been killed or wounded, and any American hostages seized by Noriega's grotesquely named "dignity battalions," did not deserve theirs. Still, the situation in Panama was deteriorating, and there had been incidents of violence against American personnel. The United States acted later than it should have, and at a less opportune moment. But there is a powerful case that further delay would have raised the ultimate costs even higher.

In a sense it was our duty to overthrow Noriega: he was in many ways our creation. The United States trained and maintained the Panamanian Defense Force for years as an ally. Our Drug Enforcement Administration and CIA had specific connections with Noriega himself; he handed over small-time drug peddlers to us, and supported the *contra* cause in Nicaragua.

Cynics will say that when American policy changed, Noriega became dispensable. But the change in American policy has been for the better. Noriega was just the sort of strutting, bemedaled authoritarian the United States used to support routinely, in the name of anti-communism. Now we back elected governments, and Noriega appropriately went into alliance with the two other anti-democratic leaders of the region, Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua and Fidel Castro of Cuba.

It's not enough, though, for the United States to install a democratic regime that may be subject to continuing pressure by the military and certainly will be forced to cope with economic woes caused by U.S. sanctions against the Noriega regime. Panama does not need a "Panamanian Defense Force." Starting with Panama, it's time we began using our influence to get the officer corps of Latin America out of politics and to dismantle themselves, on the model of Costa Rica. And it's appropriate that we find the money to help repair the Panamanian economy. In ousting Noriega, we've only begun to clean up the mess we've made in Panama.

NOTEBOOK

BORKED TONGUE: Nobody who read Stuart Taylor's *American Lawyer* profile of L. Gordon Crovitz, the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial voice on legal affairs, would make the mistake of taking anything the paper says about Robert Bork too seriously. During the 1987 nomination fight, Crovitz got into the habit of branding Bork's opponents "a gang of liberal yahoos," a "lynch mob," and "intellectual charlatans . . . peddling mendacity and deceit on a massive scale." The hysterical *Journal* editorials demonstrated an indifference to facts that has become Crovitz's trademark. Lately, however, the *Journal*'s ongoing defense of Bork has sounded a whiny, plaintive note. According to a recent editorial, Bork was unfairly denied a spot on the "Today Show" to talk about his book, *The Tempting of America*. Reviewers didn't take the book seriously enough. And the Book-of-the-Month Club rejected it as a main selection after reading it "very quickly." What headline next? Liberal Media Deny Bork Nobel Prize?

QUAYLE LOVING CUP: The *Journal* wins a prize of its own this week, the coveted Quayle Revisionism Award, first announced in these pages over a year ago (See Notebook, November 14, 1988). The prize, which readers will recall was for spotting newfound maturity and intellectual growth on the part of the Vice President, goes to Paul Gigot for his December 13 column, "The Veep's Getting Better on the Job." "It's striking to see Dan Quayle on the road now," Gigot writes. "The frozen stare of the frightened deer is gone. In small groups in particular, he seems relaxed and confident. . . . He's letting Quayle be the Quayle that some recall from the Senate." The prize is unendowed, but a hearty "well done, stout fellows!" to Mr. Gigot and the *Journal*.

THE FOG FACTOR: Bushspeak has the curious quality of being largely intelligible when you hear it spoken, but becoming incomprehensible when you see it on the printed page. On December 18 the President gave an interview to wire service reporters, which included dis-

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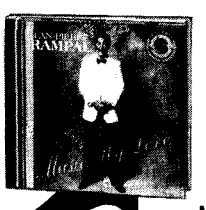
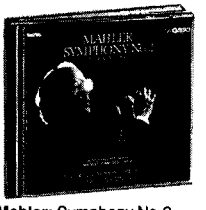
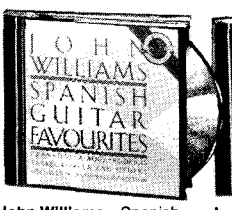
CLASSIC

Jean-Pierre Rampal— Music, My Love (CBS Master.) 383·349

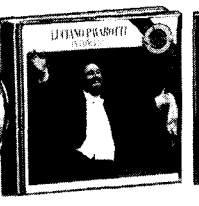




Mahler: Symphony No.2 "Resurrection." Gilbert Kaplan, London Symphony(MCA Classics) 376·517/396·515



John Williams—Spanish Guitar Favorites (CBS Master.) 378·646



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Portrait of Wynton Marsalis (CBS Master.) 373·5

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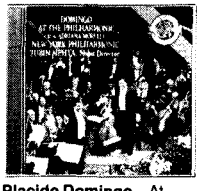

Placido Domingo—At The Philharmonic (CBS Master.) 379·289

Liszt: Piano Sonata; 3 Petrarca Sonnets; more. Vladimir Feltsman, Piano (CBS Master.) 388·538

Yo-Yo Ma/Stephane Grapelli—Anything Goes. *Mostly Cole Porter Tunes* (CBS) 387·845

Placido Domingo—The Unknown Puccini (CBS Master.) 387·829

Samuel Ramey—Opera Arias (Angel) 387·761

Liszt: Hungarian Rhapsodies. Zubin Mehta and Israel Philharmonic (CBS Master.) 386·607

Philip Glass: Solo Piano(CBS Masterworks) 386·581

Bob James—J.S.Bach: Concertos For 2 & 3 Keyboards & Synthorn. Guher & Suher Pekinel, Pianos (CBS Masterworks) 386·565

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Stravinsky: Firebird; Jeu de Cartes. Esa-Pekka Salonen, Philharmonia (CBS Master.) 385·203

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Haydn: Piano Sonatas 33, 38, 58, 60. Emanuel Ax (CBS Master.) 383·331

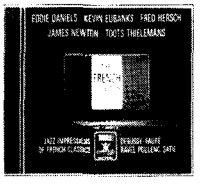
Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 3; Rhapsody On Theme Of Paganini. Vladimir Feltsman; Zubin Mehta, Israel Philharm. (CBS Master.) 383·315

Barber: Adagio For Strings; "The School For Scandal" Overture; etc. Slatkin, St. Louis Sym. (Angel) 383·307

Sibelius: Symphony No. 5. *Esa-Pekka Salonen and* Philharmonia Orchestra (CBS Master.) 358·135

Tchaikovsky Waltzes—Comissiona, Houston Sym. (Pro Arte) 357·871

Beethoven: Piano Conc. No. 5. Perahia; Haitink, Concertgebouw Orch. (CBS Masters.) 357·657



The French Collection—Jazz Impressions Of French Classics by Ravel, Debussy, Faure, Poulenc, Satie (Angel) 386·623

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Lotte Lenya Sings Kurt Weill. 3 Penny Opera, etc. (CBS Master.) 371·112

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Leonard Bernstein, Conductor—The Encore Collection, Vol. I (CBS Master.) 371·047

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John Williams—The Baroque Album (CBS Master.) 369·769

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Mozart: Eine Kleine Nachtmusik; **Pachelbel:** Canon; more. Marriner, Academy Of St. Martins-In-The-Fields(Angel) 367·375

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Chopin: Impromptus; Barcarolle; Berceuse; etc. Murray Perahia, piano (CBS Master.) 337·550

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Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 1. Peter Serkin; Robert Shaw, Atlanta Sym.(Pro Arte) 363·127

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Brahms: Double Concerto. Isaac Stern, Yo-Yo Ma; Abbado, Chicago Sym.(CBS Master.)367·250

Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto; **Saint-Saens:** Intr. & Rondo Capriccioso; **Massenet:** Meditation. Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg (Angel) 366·872

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Beethoven: Symphony No. 9. Norrington, The London Classical Players(Angel) 365·619

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Verdi: Requiem. Muti, Pavarotti; Chorus & Orch. of Teatro Alla Scala(Angel) 365·247/395·244

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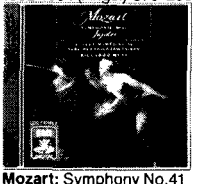

Mozart: Symphony No.41 (Jupiter); Divertimento No.1,K136. Muti, Berlin Phil.(Angel) 386·466

Beethoven: Complete Sonatas For Piano & Cello. Yo-Yo Ma, Emanuel Ax(CBS Master.) 362·913/392·910

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Beethoven: Overtures (Fidelio; Leonore No.3; more). Tennstedt, London Phil.(Angel) 335·075

Tchaikovsky: Suites From The Ballets: Swan Lake & Sleeping Beauty. Muti, Philadelphia Orch.(Angel) 334·680

Mahler: Symphony No. 4. Kathleen Battle, Soprano; Lorin Maazel, Vienna Phil.(CBS Master.) 332·866

Brahms: Symphony No. 1. Tennstedt, London Philhar.(Angel) 332·668

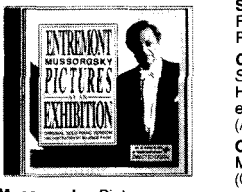
Bizet: Carmen and L'Arlesienne Suites 1 & 2. Ozawa, *Orch. Nat'l De* France(Angel) 331·595

Prokofiev: Peter & The Wolf; **Saint-Sains:** Carnival Of The Animals. I Perlman; K&M Labeque; Mehta, Israel Philharmonic (Angel) 331·322

Mozart's Greatest Hits—Theme From Elvira Madigan; Rondo Alla Turca; more. Various artists (CBS Master.) 330·613

Wagner: *Overtures.* Tannhauser; Lohengrin; Die Meistersinger; more. Tennstedt, Berlin Phil.(Angel) 330·134

Handel: Water Music. Jean-Claude Malgoire and La Grande Ecurie (CBS Master.) 329·615



Mussorgsky: Pictures At An Exhibition. The Original Piano Version *and* The Ravel Orchestration. Philippe Entremont (Pro Arte) 385·187

Vladimir Horowitz Plays Schumann: Toccata; etc. (CBS Master.) 357·236

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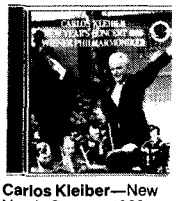

Carlos Kleiber—New Year's Concert 1989. Vienna Philharmonic (CBS Masterworks) 385·823/395·

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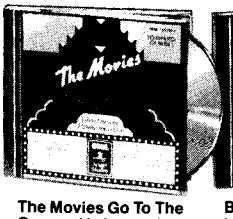

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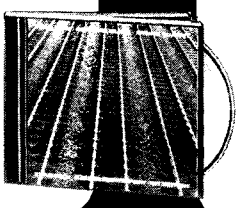

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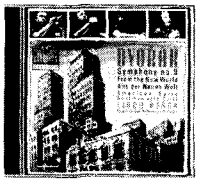

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cussion of the new opening to China: "I notice now that some of the critics who were so opposed and using this fantastically, diabolically anti-me language, they come up now saying, 'Well, if you get A, B, and C, then it will be all right or then we'll understand.' Let them just stay tuned in." No need to go ballistic, George. We're not really anti-you. Not diabolically, anyhow.

FREEDOM TRIUMPHS: Please note that this is a combined issue. The editors are taking a break to shop for chunks of the Berlin Wall. Merry Christmas and Chappy Chanukah.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

MR. POPULARITY

By Fred Barnes

Don't let the trappings of the Presidency fool you. George Bush is still a goofy guy. Speaking to 10,000 people in a park in Spokane, Washington, on September 16, Bush said, "Please be seated." Of course, there were no chairs. "Sorry about that," Bush said sheepishly after laughter erupted. In a residential neighborhood in Houston on December 7, Bush began an anti-drug speech with these words: "Sugarplum day care." As best anyone could tell, he had spotted those words on a placard as he mounted the stage, and had an irrepressible urge to repeat them. Bush also has his own unique pronunciation of Lech Walesa's first name. He refers to Walesa as "Lock," and did so while awarding Walesa the Medal of Freedom at the White House on November 13. Why not say "Leck" like everyone else, including Walesa? Well, somebody told Bush a few years ago that "Lock" is the correct pronunciation, and he's sticking with it.

If the public holds Bush's goofy streak against him, there's no evidence of it. His popularity is extraordinarily high after one year in the White House. Many of Bush's aides had expected a significant drop-off in his glittering poll numbers in the fall. A dip after eight or nine months is normal for a rookie President. But it didn't happen, or did just barely. In the CBS/*New York Times* poll, Bush's favorability fell from 69 percent to 63 percent from September to November. In the Gallup Poll it rose, from 68 percent in October, to 70 percent in November, to 71 percent in December following the Malta summit with Mikhail Gorbachev. John Sununu, the White House chief of staff, boasts that these numbers "are virtually unprecedented in history."

Bush has stood the rules for success in the White House on their head. He's violated nearly every rule learned from Ronald Reagan's Presidency—and gotten away with it. True, Bush has a wider margin for error than most Presidents were allowed. So long as peace, prosperity, and the collapse of communism continue, he's bound to be, at worst, moderately popular. But he's immoderately popular. I can't explain it, except to say that the rules were wrong.

The most widely accepted rule, based on Reagan's experience, is that a President should stick to a few themes, not go off in a dozen directions. Neither Bush nor Sununu bought this. When junior staffers at the White House advocated the few-themes approach last winter, Sununu reacted angrily. "Hey, we can't do that because government doesn't work like that," he snapped. That ended the discussion. In a speech on December 13 summarizing (and extolling) Bush's first year, Sununu cited a dozen issues, representing a dozen different directions Bush had gone off in.

Bush has ignored two other rules of strategy, namely that a new President should move on domestic policy before turning to foreign affairs and must pile up legislative successes his first year. Reagan didn't go to a summit or visit China during his entire first term. He concentrated on budget and tax cuts in 1981, then coasted for three years. The result: his first term is regarded as the most successful in a generation. Bush rushed to Beijing a month after taking office and has made two overtures to China since the Tiananmen Square massacre. He's taken two trips to Europe, one to Malta. He's also "the master of the small gesture," insists Sununu. He brought President Mitterrand of France to Kennebunkport, Maine, for a weekend, dragged President Mubarak of Egypt to a baseball game, and "spent countless hours" on the phone with foreign leaders. Meanwhile, Bush's attention to domestic policy has been spotty. Sununu argues that he laid a "foundation." But for what? Bush doesn't like most of the legislation bubbling up in Congress.

Reagan's popularity was supposedly grounded in his skill as a TV performer. This led to the assumption that a President has to be good on television to be popular. Bush is lousy on TV. The rap on Henry Jackson applies to Bush: if he gave a fireside chat, the fire would go out. His best TV appearance was the night before Thanksgiving when he talked about the demise of communism. I'll bet remote controls began clicking around the country after a few minutes. My mind began to wander after ten minutes, and I'm paid to watch. When Bush invites reporters and TV cameras into the Oval Office for a chat, there's not much stagecraft. As he talked on November 28 about the summit, then four days away, the cameras couldn't get a shot from the front. He appeared on the evening news shows in profile. Michael Deaver would never have allowed that, but it worked for Bush.

Reagan minimized the time he spent with reporters. Bush can't get enough. In his first 11 months, he held 14 informal and 31 formal press conferences, chatted

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with reporters six times in the Oval Office, and was interviewed 51 times by news organizations and four times by groups. What comes across is Bush's comfort in dealing extemporaneously with the press. Reagan was uncomfortable, but he nonetheless managed to dominate the news. Bush doesn't dominate. Days go by when the White House isn't a major subject in the news. On ABC, CBS, and NBC, Bush has gotten one-third the coverage Reagan did his first year. In fact, the coverage of the entire Bush Administration is roughly the same as the personal coverage of Reagan, according to a study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs. The Bush White House could not care less. "They don't even try to get events in time for the TV news," says an official. The Walesa ceremony, for instance, was held at 6 p.m., too late for the evening news shows.

Another rule Bush honors in the breach is that an ideological rudder, or at least a vision, is necessary. Reagan was an ideological architect. Bush is a bricklayer. He's split the difference on practically every issue he's confronted, except taxes and abortion. (On abortion, there's no middle ground. Either you hold your position or you capitulate.) Bush has taken several stabs at articulating a vision of how the world should look in the 1990s, but he hasn't made much headway. On Thanksgiving eve, he tried the theme of walls. The Berlin Wall had been opened, but Bush cautioned "that some walls still remain between East and West. These are the invisible walls of suspicion, the walls of doubt, misunderstanding, and miscalculation." That's not poetry. But it's closer than what came next: a five-point plan for knocking the walls down.

The flip side to a President with an ideology is a White House chief of staff who's an experienced, pragmatic pol. Jim Baker was just that under Reagan and became the model for future chiefs of staff. Sununu doesn't fit the model. He's neither experienced in Washington nor a pragmatist, but he's done fine. He, not Vice President Dan Quayle, is the conservative movement's main man in the White House. More than anyone else, Sununu was responsible for persuading Bush to veto four bills that made abortions easier to obtain.

One final rule. Reagan made the rhetorical Presidency the rage in Washington. How else could a President operate effectively, except by going over the head of Congress to the American people? Stirring the nation to action was supposed to be the President's first priority. It's not Bush's. "This is as unrhetorical a Presidency as you'll get," says a White House official. Bush is better at appealing to a room of kids than whipping up public sentiment. On Halloween he talked to children at a White House party. Bush told them Halloween is "a time for ghosts and goblins, for haunted houses and scary stories. But right now I want to talk to you just briefly about a scary story that isn't make-believe . . . I'm talking about illegal drugs and how they hurt people and how they hurt families, hurt kids, some of them just like you." As Bush spoke, the kids hung on every word. •

PRAGUE POSTCARD

ROSES IN THE SNOW

By Stephen Cohen

On December 9 a van carrying a gift of 50,000 roses from Portugal to the Czech people was greeted by a huge crowd on Norodni Avenue. Standing on the van's roof, a Portuguese student expressed his country's support for Czech freedom. As a heavy snow began to fall, the roses were handed out to the people. It seemed a fitting metaphor for the Czechs' peaceful revolution, the cold snow symbolizing 40 years of Communist dictatorship, and the roses, Czech hopes for freedom and democracy. It also seemed appropriate that the gift came from Portugal, another small, vulnerable European nation that had suffered decades of oppressive rule.

The next day a new Czechoslovak Cabinet took office, the first since 1948 without a Communist majority. The opposition Civic Forum, which negotiated for the new Cabinet, was itself barely three weeks old, founded on November 19 by Czech dissidents and human rights activists who had been in and out of prison for 20 years. The Czechs have a saying about the astonishing pace of change: "Ten years, ten months, ten days." In Poland it took ten years from Solidarity's founding to the Solidarity government. In East Germany ten months elapsed between the start of mass protests and the Communist Party's disintegration. But when Czech police brutally attacked student marchers on November 17, nationwide protests erupted and only ten days later the constitutional guarantee of Communist Party domination was repealed.

One reason for Civic Forum's success is the moral authority of its principal leader, Vaclav Havel, a playwright who spent five years in prison, whose plays could not be performed, and whose banned writings circulated widely in samizdat form. When asked what he had learned from his rise from persecuted dissident to popular leader, Havel replied, "When a person behaves in keeping with his conscience, when he tries to speak the truth, and when he tries to behave as a citizen, even under conditions where citizenship is degraded, it may not lead to anything, yet it might. But what surely will not lead to anything is when a person calculates whether it will lead to anything or not."

Civic Forum leaders, however, were not just ivory tower moralists. Using modern political technology and old-fashioned grass-roots politics, they bypassed the Communist-controlled newspapers, radio, and television. At different locations in Prague, TV sets were

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mounted high inside store windows, with speakers attached by bailing wire to outside walls. A videotape of the November 17 marchers, holding candles, singing "We Shall Overcome" in Czech, and being beaten by police, was played and replayed. From early morning until late at night, crowds of shoppers and commuters stood watching, mesmerized. Students distributed copies of the tape all over Czechoslovakia. An entire museum was turned over to an exhibition of photographs of the November 17 march. Hundreds of thousands of Czechs passed through the gallery to see pictures of police beating peaceful marchers.

Writers and artists produced leaflets and posters bearing messages from Civic Forum. Copies were taped to nearly every wall and store window in downtown Prague. At night teams of high school students, organized by Civic Forum and wearing its improvised credentials, removed older leaflets and posters to make room for new ones the next morning.

Civic Forum also showed considerable political sophistication by emphasizing that it did not condemn all Communists and would not threaten Soviet interests. In a December 2 interview in the Communist paper, *Rude Pravo*, Havel stated, "There is no doubt that among the Communists there are endless numbers of clever, talented, productive people who for decades had to keep silent the way all non-Communists had to keep silent."

On December 7, after the Communist Party prime minister attacked the opposition for presenting ultimatums and threatening a general strike, a Civic Forum delegation visited the Czech defense minister to assure him that they supported a Communist remaining in charge of the military. In turn, the defense minister stated that Czech troops would not be used against the Czech people. The same day Civic Forum briefed the Soviet Embassy on the deadlocked negotiations with the current Czech government and on plans for a general strike. And a Soviet-Czech friendship society vacated its offices in downtown Prague so that they could be occupied by Civic Forum, which needed additional quarters.

Civic Forum's office could have been mistaken for the headquarters of the American anti-Vietnam War movement in the late 1960s. Dozens of university students worked day and night, on little sleep and infrequent meals. Meanwhile their elders, the dissidents and human rights activists who organized Civic Forum, met interminably to ensure that decisions were made only by consensus. Periodically the leadership would emerge to negotiate with the government or to hold press conferences for the international reporters assembled in Prague.

At Civic Forum press conferences, held in Prague's Magic Lantern Theater, nearly all questions were posed in English and answered in Czech, with instant translation by Rita Klimova, a Czech human rights activist who grew up in the United States during World War II and speaks idiomatic English with a perfect New York accent. Usually a half-dozen members of Civic Forum's collective leadership sat on the theater's stage, taking turns providing answers. On December 7, however, following the regular press conference, Havel was interviewed alone. Dressed in blue jeans and sweater, slouching in his chair, and chain-smoking, Havel explained, "I have called this conference because of the many requests from the press for interviews which I have been unable to grant. If I did so, I would be spending all my time commenting on the revolution and have no time for participating in the revolution."

One journalist kept wanting to know whether Havel was a candidate for Czechoslovakia's presidency. "Many Civic Forum supporters are wearing Havel for President buttons today," he asked. "Are you running for president?" Havel replied, "My profession is that of playwright. The more democracy and normal conditions come to the country, the less will be my role in political life."

"Do you support those who produced the Havel for President buttons?"

"I understand the buttons come from Hungary. My influence does not yet extend that far."

Frustrated, the reporter shouted at Havel, "You are ducking my question. I asked whether you support those who produced the buttons. Answer my question."

"I've answered your question in a roundabout way, which it seems to me is very presidential. I've watched President Bush's press conferences on television, and he answers questions in the same fashion."

Three days later, on December 10, Havel formally declared his candidacy. On December 19, the new prime minister, Marian Calfa, told Parliament it had "no alternative" but to elect Havel president of Czechoslovakia.

STEPHEN COHEN teaches at Georgetown Law Center.

Go east, young consultant.

BLOC PARTIES

By Jacob Weisberg

Eastern Europeans aren't the only ones taking advantage of the newly hospitable political climate. To seasonally underemployed Washington entrepreneurs, the Soviet bloc has become a stirring new empire of opportunity. The alacrity with which various consultants, lobbyists, pollsters, and media buyers have rushed in to peddle their wares provides an object lesson in what the old guard might call the parasitic nature of capitalism.

Of course, few Eastern European or Soviet political parties have the financial resources with which to hire American advisers. But some of the shrewder Washing-

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ton operators have figured out ways to profit from the crisis. Frank Mankiewicz, an executive at the p.r. firm of Hill and Knowlton, who was Robert Kennedy's press secretary and later George McGovern's campaign manager, has negotiated a deal to advise the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP) and its unelected president, Imre Pozsgay. The HSP is the reform remnant of Hungary's ruling Communists, who are hoping to salvage a few parliamentary seats in the country's first free election in more than 40 years, scheduled to take place in March. Mankiewicz and his colleague Jill Schuker won't disclose how much they're being paid, but say they see nothing wrong with advising cleaned-up Communists in a multiparty state. That's not to say they approve of the group's principles, whatever they may be this week. (Mankiewicz says that in one meeting he mentioned Shaw's famous remark that the trouble with Christianity is that it has never been tried. The assembled party leaders laughed dutifully. Then one of them sighed, "And the trouble with Marxism is that it has.")

Mankiewicz says he is representing the HSP, whose public approval rating stands at three percent, "because they asked first." "It's a good opportunity for Hill and Knowlton to move into Eastern Europe," he said. He hasn't worked out his strategy in detail, but says he may advise Pozsgay to portray Nicolae Ceausescu, the despot of neighboring Romania, as the "Willie Horton of Hungary." It may seem like a dubious strategy, but the HSP doesn't have to worry about getting its money's worth, since it has a few more months to squander the people's assets before being turned out of power. Working for a certain loser, however, may backfire for Hill and Knowlton, since the next government would be within its rights to ask the firm to pay back its fees.

Well-connected Republican "operatives" are getting the U.S. Government to underwrite their contact-making and reputation enhancement in the East. Rich Bond and Ceci McInturff of Bond Donatelli, Inc., both of whom have worked for Bush in various capacities since his 1980 Presidential campaign, recently won an Agency for International Development (AID) contract to study Hungary's new electoral process. (Bond was Bush's national political director in 1988. McInturff was a national director working under him.) Although neither has any background in Eastern European affairs, they were selected by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, an organization that monitors elections for AID, to receive $275 a day plus expenses to write a report on the future of democracy in Hungary.

Travis Horel, coordinator for human rights and democratic initiatives at AID, says the purpose of the Bond-McInturff trip, which will cost the U.S. Government about $10,000, is to determine how the agency can expend its funds more effectively in Hungary. Apparently it didn't occur to them that they could start by not wasting money on redundant studies by party hacks. Bond and McInturff's mission duplicates the election-monitoring and party-building work being done by the Democratic and Republican institutes, the party-sponsored foundations that work to promote democracy abroad. AID has already contributed $300,000 to the institutes' projects in Hungary, supplemented by $60,000 from the National Endowment for Democracy.

Until now, the Republican Institute has been fairly docile in Eastern Europe, underwriting Polish translations of books by Jeane J. Kirkpatrick and Jean-François Revel that say Communist states are inherently incapable of change. But the National Democratic Institute has been fulfilling the AID mandate. The institute, which is supported by the German Marshall Fund as well as by the U.S. Government, wins high marks from members of Hungarian opposition parties for its party-building workshops. These efforts stand out from the plethora of democratic assistance initiatives both because the recipients consider them genuinely useful and because the sponsors work pro bono. Fred Martin, a former adviser to Mario Cuomo and Al Gore, is following NDI's example by advising the Alliance of Free Democrats, a genuinely pro-democratic party, for free.

Right-wing lobbyists, who have been showing poorly of late in ideological and fund-raising battles in Washington, are trying for a comeback in Estonia. Paul Weyrich recently returned from a trip to Hungary and the Soviet Union. It was paid for by adhesive baron Robert Krieble (he invented the industrial equivalent of Krazy Glue), who is a prolific contributor to conservative causes. Weyrich's group, the Free Congress Foundation, offered "political training" to various opposition groups.

This expedition generated favorable publicity for Weyrich. A fierce anti-Communist once identified with loopy far-right causes like Roberto d'Aubuisson in El Salvador, he now wins praise from quasi-liberal columnist David Broder for his open-mindedness about reform inside the totalitarian ant heap. "Weyrich has always called things as he sees them. These days he is speaking to his colleagues on the right with a fervor of a man who has seen something inside the Communist world he did not know was there," Broder wrote in early December. Such p.r. brings contributions and respectability.

But in fact the Krieble-Weyrich trip was something of a disaster. The trouble began when Krieble's assistant William Pascoe first traveled to Europe with Jack Wheeler to meet dissidents. Wheeler, an adventure-seeker who heads the Krieble-supported Freedom Research Foundation, is close to Ollie North, supports "liberation" movements like the bloodthirsty Renamo rebels in Mozambique, and is known on the right as the Indiana Jones of the Reagan Doctrine.

Hoping for some financial assistance, representatives of the Alliance of Free Democrats (SDS) and the Association of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) met with Wheeler and Pascoe, and agreed to further talks. Both groups expressed interest in attending a training conference. But shortly before the Weyrich party was scheduled to leave for Budapest in November, the SDS learned about Wheeler's ties to North and Renamo, and canceled the session. Pascoe suspects that Tom Lynch of the U.S.

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Embassy in Budapest told the Hungarians not to participate. Lynch denies this. What really happened is less than clear. According to SDS leader Balint Magyar, the party felt that Weyrich "just wanted publicity from the fact that they're bringing democracy to Hungary." SDS members had already participated in NDI workshops and felt they didn't need Weyrich's advice.

Weyrich's group decided to proceed with FIDESZ alone. But by the time they arrived in Budapest, the student party's leaders had discovered Wheeler's and Weyrich's undemocratic connections, and wanted nothing to do with them. When Zsuzsanna Szelényi and Tamas Tirts of FIDESZ met Weyrich, Krieble, and Pascoe for dinner in the Forum Hotel shortly after their arrival, they said they hadn't agreed to be "trained." Weyrich became furious, turning red in the face and shouting abuse. According to Pascoe's trip report, the FIDESZ representatives were extremely upset at Weyrich's rudeness at dinner. "In 27 years of totalitarian rule, I have not been treated that badly," one member told him.

Ironically, the only party that finally consented to listen to Weyrich's thoughts on how to make direct mail look like personal correspondence was the Democratic Forum (MDF). The MDF is Hungary's largest opposition organization, but politically the odd man out. Whereas SDS and FIDESZ are free marketeers, the MDF advocates a "middle way" between capitalism and socialism. But by that point in the trip, Weyrich wasn't being very choosy about his trainees.

In Moscow and Tallinn, Weyrich and his associates were finally able to link up with nationalists who share their worldview. Besides the usual direct mail and computer advice, campaign experts led members of the Inter-Regional Group of the Supreme Soviet and the Estonian Heritage Society in a mock election between "Ivan the Terrible" and "Michael the Liberator." The Soviets divided into teams and worked out strategies. They discussed sound bites, negative campaigning, and how to turn "negatives," like drunken driving arrests, into "positives." It didn't take long for the evolved art of the political smear to catch on in the U.S.S.R. Bob McAdam, one of Weyrich's trainers, says the Russians and Estonians played the campaign game brilliantly.

Hungary may be safely on the road to pluralism, but Gorbachev has made it clear that he won't tolerate the dismemberment of the Soviet Union itself. The Heritage Foundation has a delegation in Estonia now, which, says Senior Vice President Burton Yale Pines, "is going to provide the ideological side of the equation." It would be tragic if Free Congress and Heritage helped motivate Baltic nationalists to provoke a showdown, which would mean a violent setback to the cause of reform. NDI has decided not to work inside the Soviet Union because of this danger. But Weyrich is moving full steam ahead, now planning more training in the Urals.

Bits of the Berlin Wall are now on sale in department stores around the United States. It's a pretty tacky Christmas gift, but harmless enough. Unlike Washington's self-promoters, Macy's doesn't pretend its business is advancing the interests of democracy. •

Moscow's view of Eastern Europe.

DOCTRINAL DISCORD

By Angela Stent

A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism's demise. Communist Parties are disintegrating, their leaders jailed for corruption and reviled by outraged populations in mass street demonstrations. New coalition governments are struggling to survive. And behind this turmoil stands Mikhail Gorbachev. He engineered the downfall of the 40-year-old Soviet empire, personally intervening to secure the resignations of hard-line leaders in East Germany, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia, after encouraging the earlier Polish and Hungarian renunciation of the Communist monopoly on power. Within the Warsaw Pact, only Romania continues to resist reform, and the word is that Romanians today would welcome a Soviet invasion.

But the Brezhnev Doctrine is dead, as the Warsaw Pact's recent apology for the invasion of Czechoslovakia clearly signals. On a recent visit to Moscow, I was told by one of Gorbachev's top advisers on Eastern Europe that only its obituary remains to be written. Eastern Europe is now on its own. Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennady Gerasimov announced that the Brezhnev Doctrine has been replaced by the Sinatra Doctrine, based on the principle that all countries must develop their systems "their way."

However, Gorbachev has gone beyond the Sinatra Doctrine and introduced one of his own. He actively intervened when countries going their way did not move fast enough from repression to democracy. He pushed recalcitrant Eastern European apparatchiki toward political pluralism, allowing the legalization of alternative parties and the abolition of the leading role of the Communist Party. Meanwhile, he has ruled out similar changes in the Soviet Union itself. It seems unlikely that he intends to preside over the demise of the entire Soviet imperial system. He apparently believes he can overthrow the old system in Eastern Europe while maintaining parts of that system in his own country, and eventually emerge with a stronger alliance. It's a risky venture.

The last time a Soviet leader simultaneously tried to reform the Soviet Union and its allies, he failed. Nikita Khrushchev too was motivated by domestic exigencies (growing popular rage at the impact of political and economic Stalinism, which had impoverished and terrorized people's lives), and he did not believe that some Eastern European countries would take his de-Stalinization campaign further than he intended it to

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go. But if Stalinism was wrong, then why remain under Soviet domination, and why perpetuate a Stalinist socioeconomic system? The Soviet invasion of Hungary and the near invasion of Poland in 1956 brutally reminded Eastern Europe that Moscow, and only Moscow, would determine the limits beyond which reform in Eastern Europe could not venture.

Thirty years later Gorbachev and other top officials have been taken aback by the speed with which Communist Parties are collapsing. One scholar described the rapidity of developments in East Germany as a "premature baby." Yet most experts in Moscow believe that though the Soviet alliance system will look very different in five years' time, it is salvageable. "We must have secure borders and friendly neighbors," says the Gorbachev adviser, "and we will maintain the level of political, cultural, and economic ties with Eastern Europe that we have built up since the war." That is the essence of the Gorbachev Doctrine.

The origins of the Gorbachev Doctrine lie in the Soviet Union's perilous economic condition. Productivity and growth rates are declining and inflation is rising, all of which has contributed to ethnic tensions. The Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Uzbeks, and Baltic nations, to name the most visible of the current protesters, harbor century-old resentments, which have been inflamed by the perception that some ethnic groups are receiving a disproportionate share of scarce goods. Some officials fear major fuel and food shortages this winter, and people in Moscow speak of civil war between the various nationalities in the present, not future, tense. Gorbachev realizes that he must cut back on foreign commitments if the system is to survive.

Indeed, during talks on Eastern Europe in late October in an ongoing U.S.-Soviet exchange of scholars and government officials, including Georgii Shakhnazarov, Gorbachev's chief adviser on Eastern Europe, and Oleg Bogomolov, a respected economist at the Academy of Sciences and a member of the Congress of People's Deputies, we had a difficult time getting the Soviet participants to focus on the tumult across the borders. Everyone was preoccupied with the troubles at home. There was universal agreement that, so far, *perestroika* has not worked. "Our people are profoundly suspicious of private property," said one participant, "and this makes it very difficult to move toward a market economy." As Bogomolov some time ago described the "perestroikamobile": the key is in the ignition and the motor has started, but it has not yet moved.

The Eastern European economies too, of course, are in varying degrees of decay. Eighteen months ago, at our first meeting with the Soviet group, they were far more pessimistic about the situation in Eastern Europe than most of their American counterparts. Although no one then was willing to admit that there was a legitimacy crisis in Eastern Europe, they understood far better than we did—because of their extensive contacts with Party officials and scholars in Eastern Europe—that the veneer of stability in most countries was extremely thin. They blamed the problem on the Brezhnev policy of immobility at home and neglect of Eastern Europe's political and economic difficulties. However, they now realize that the prospects for improving economic performance are more encouraging in East Germany and Czechoslovakia than in the Soviet Union. Many seem to be convinced that the Soviet Union would be better off without the burden of Eastern Europe, a view that was only hinted at last year.

Given the deteriorating economic situation in the entire Comecon region, Gorbachev can no longer afford to subsidize Eastern Europe, especially Poland, with its staggering $40 billion hard currency debt. The intent is to attract as much Western capital and investment as possible, in order to enable Eastern Europe to produce goods that are competitive on world markets. Gorbachev hopes that Western, especially West German, economic largess eventually will benefit the Soviet Union, not only directly, but also through improved Eastern European performance. But Gorbachev's vision may be flawed. If events continue along their present course, Eastern European countries may well insist on reorienting their economies away from the U.S.S.R. and toward Western Europe.

The Gorbachev Doctrine has been pursued on the assumption that Eastern Europe will be able to create entirely new, viable models of reform socialism, a "third way" between Soviet-style socialism and Western democracy. Most of the Soviet participants in our discussions were optimistic about finding a third way, even in the Soviet Union, although they admitted that some countries may have a difficult time unearthing their national, democratic roots. The crowds on the streets of East Berlin and Prague talk eloquently about an idyllic post-Communist society. Few have yet confronted the more troubling questions they face along with the Soviet Union, such as the ethnic tensions within their own societies.

Bogomolov and other colleagues, including Gorbachev's closest adviser, Leonid Abalkin, put their faith in the creation of a "socialist market," upholding the Swedish model as the one to emulate. Sweden was praised both for its social-democratic political system and its efficient welfare economy. Yet the Swedish economy is in private hands, even if the distribution system is socialist, and personal income taxes—hitherto not part of the Soviet economic system—are very high. Gorbachev's reforms would have to go much further before the Soviet Union could begin to contemplate approaching a social-democratic market system. During our discussions, not even the most imaginative scholar could describe what reformed socialism would look like. The fact is, as many in Moscow admitted to me, there are no models for a post-totalitarian form of socialism anywhere in the world.

Moreover, Gorbachev has set in motion a revolution in Eastern Europe that may well hasten the demise of one-party rule at home. The abolition of the Communist Party's monopoly on power in much of Eastern Europe has already had reverberations within the Soviet Union.

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Lithuania has ended the leading role of the Communist Party and committed itself to a multiparty system. Other Soviet republics are bound to follow, and within the Russian republic itself disciples of Andrei Sakharov have committed themselves to abolishing the Communist Party's leading role.

A striking impression from my Moscow discussions was the disagreement they engendered about how to deal with Eastern Europe beyond the Gorbachev Doctrine. Scholars at Bogomolov's institute advocate pluralism and autonomy for Eastern Europe, but some officials at the Diplomatic Academy (which trains those in the Foreign Service) and at the Central Committee's International Department clearly have reservations. One Party official discussed Eastern Europeans and Jews in stereotypes that were uncomfortably reminiscent of the Stalinist and Brezhnev days. He also reiterated that the United States and the Soviet Union shared an interest in containing Germany, in essence asking America to help the Soviet Union if events get out of control in East Germany. For Gorbachev's detractors on the right, the decline and fall of communism in Eastern Europe is a clear warning about the dangers of too much *glasnost* at home.

Is Moscow placing any limits on Eastern Europeans' march toward self-determination? Soviet security interests may no longer demand domestic ideological and political conformity in Eastern Europe, but they do require some form of foreign policy and military alliance. The major criterion is the maintenance of existing security arrangements with the Soviet Union, and the continued division of Germany, as Gorbachev has made clear. I repeatedly heard that no country can leave the Warsaw Pact, although that organization itself is undergoing *perestroika* and will emphasize its political ties more than it has.

Politburo member Aleksandr Yakovlev has said he could imagine that eventually the Eastern rooms in the Common European home could have "Finnish furnishing." Finlandization is certainly what the Eastern Europeans would like, involving bilateral neutrality treaties with the Soviet Union but complete domestic autonomy. However, a Finlandized Eastern Europe would probably lead to an American withdrawal from Europe, which so far Gorbachev does not favor.

In this volatile situation, Gorbachev does not have a coherent vision for Eastern Europe's future. He may hope that the complicated mosaic of Eastern European national, political, and economic traditions and aspirations will somehow repattern itself as a voluntary association of pluralist, socialist states. But in this view there will still be two Germanys and two alliance systems in Europe for some time. The new European order will be based on the consent of the governed, not on dictatorship.

And here lies the basic flaw in this improvised scheme. Self-determination within Eastern Europe may soon prove to be incompatible with foreign policy loyalty. If a democratic Hungary votes to leave the Soviet alliance system, the only way to prevent the breakup of the Warsaw Pact would be through direct Soviet intervention, something that Gorbachev has formally eschewed. If a freely elected East German government votes to reunify with West Germany, how will the Soviet Union prevent it? Since 1917 Soviet domestic and foreign policies have been closely connected. In the new, post-Communist Eastern Europe, the people may reject the postwar foreign policy structures as they have renounced 40 years of communism at home. The Gorbachev Doctrine may indeed vindicate the dialectical-materialist view of history—it contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction.

ANGELA STENT, associate professor of government at Georgetown University, is completing a book on Soviet policy toward Europe.

Is 'white nationalism' the problem?

HEAD TO COME

By Scott McConnell and Eric Breindel

Battles over what children will be taught in school always have an ideological aspect. Such struggles occur at every educational level from day care to graduate school, but the public school system, long a cockpit for political passions, is especially vulnerable. And those passions are never more engaged than when the fight involves social studies and history, because any picture of the past implies judgments about the nature of the present and the needs of the future.

A still obscure controversy in the education bureaucracy of New York state may herald the next stage of what has become a national school curriculum struggle. Last July selected New Yorkers—politicians, professional educators, and journalists—received an 80-page report titled "A Curriculum of Inclusion." The report was produced by a task force appointed by the state's Education Commissioner, Thomas Sobol, and chaired by Hazel Dukes, a widely respected New York political personality who serves as statewide chair of the NAACP. The 16 other members of the task force are either educators or activists concerned with minority affairs. Their report bluntly endorses a radical and deeply pessimistic critique of American society.

The task force's mission was to consider the New York state elementary and high school curriculum in light of the needs of blacks, Hispanics, and other minority students; to determine if the curriculum was insensitive or irrelevant to these needs; and, if appropriate, to propose changes. "A Curriculum of Inclusion" is the result. It raises the question of what vision of American

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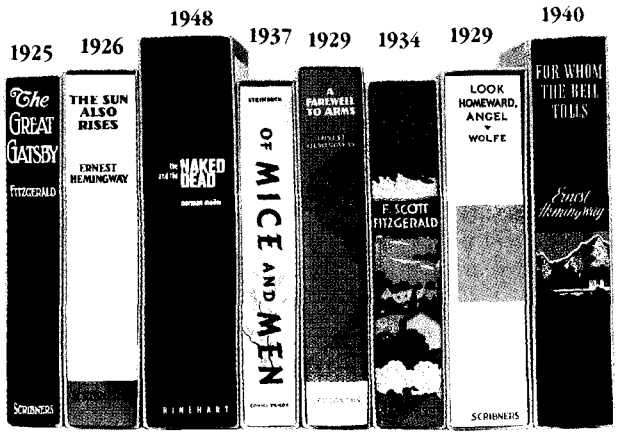

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society will inform what New York's schoolchildren will be taught. Should the schools emphasize that the multifarious cultural strands of American society coexist with and contribute to each other through citizenship in a polity that is open to all but is Western in its origins and major institutions? Or, as the task force recommends, should the education system stress the separate—often non-Western—ethnic identities of New York's students, while treating the society's main institutions as instruments of "European-American" domination?

The task force was convened to meet what both educators and employers regard as a growing problem: while non-whites should make up a growing percentage of New York's work force, "in almost every quantifiable measure of performance," according to the report itself, "large numbers of children of non-European descent are not doing as well as expected." This lack of success in school means that many will be unable to meet the entry-level requirements of New York's major corporate employers.

The Sobol report offers one main explanation for this phenomenon: it is the result of "stereotyping and misinformation"—which has "had a damaging effect on the psyche of young people of African, Asian, Latino, and Native American descent." Accordingly, while members of minority cultures come to feel "alienated and devalued [by what they are taught], members of the majority culture are exclusionary and overvalued."

The report's principal author is Harry Hamilton, a professor of atmospheric science at the State University of New York at Albany. Neither Hamilton nor the other members of the task force—as exemplified by Dukes, its chair—are known for their radical sensibilities. The responsibility for the Sobol report's often extremist tone, therefore, probably lies largely with the task force's chief consultant, Leonard Jeffries, chairman of the Department of Black Studies at the City College of New York, who is credited with helping create the initial draft.

The report's very first sentence illustrates that tone: "African Americans, Asian Americans, Puerto Ricans/Latinos, and Native Americans have all been the victims of an intellectual and educational oppression that has characterized the culture and institutions of the United States and the European American world for centuries." Here as elsewhere, the report is marked by a phraseology that suggests a Third World-style radical political perspective.

The task force's exhaustive review of New York's teaching materials turned up very little that even arguably documents its charge that existing curricular materials are marked by a "systematic bias" that reflects "hidden assumptions of 'white supremacy and white nationalism,' " and nothing at all that can properly be termed racist. The few concrete instances that are cited are trivial.

For example, the panel notes that a single text makes reference to the "Spanish-American War," thereby failing to conform to the new academic fashion, which is to designate that conflict as the "Spanish-Cuban-American War." Another complaint is the failure of a high school social studies unit on Africa to incorporate materials on Egypt and the Nile Valley. The result is that students are not taught that Africa was "the birthplace of humanity and earliest cradle of civilization." This "removal of Egypt and the Nile Valley from Africa," according to the report, "is a perfect example of the unwillingness or inability to move away from Eurocentric conceptualization and modality."

The report locates the roots of this ostensible bias in the way in which school texts emphasize the European origins of American culture and institutions. According to it, the curriculum "gives European-American children the seriously distorted notion that their culture is the only one to have contributed to the growth of our society." Among the various ways the report recommends that white students be stripped of their "inappropriately elitist attitudes" is to teach American history so that students learn that ours is a deeply flawed political system.

This approach is elaborated in Jeffries's appendix to the report, which evaluates the curriculum from the point of view of African American culture. While conceding that much of the material used in New York's schools "represents substantial progress in portraying the multicultural nature of American society," Jeffries nevertheless asserts flatly that the curriculum reflects "deep-seated pathologies of racial hatred."

"Action to root out this illness," Jeffries warns, "must be proactive and substantial in view of the generations of indoctrination and the strength of the processes of institutionalization." He adds: "It is too little too late to believe that inclusion of multicultural perspectives on the pluralism of American society can reverse long established and entrenched policies and practices. Much more severe corrective action is needed to create the dynamics of positive change."

The corrective action Jeffries has in mind is illustrated by his analysis of teaching materials pertaining to the American Revolution. He faults the curriculum for failing to present the Founders as slaveholders intent on "sacrificing higher ideals on the alter [sic] of materialism and profitmaking." In a section on the early history of the newly independent republic, Jeffries writes:

> Under *Major Ideas*, the syllabus states that, "The United States Constitution was an advanced revolutionary plan of government in its time and remains so today." It further notes that "the Constitution represents the embodiment of the belief in human dignity, liberty, justice, and equality in theory, but not always in practice." Unfortunately, this type of "White Nationalism" or egocentrism blinds us as to the flawed nature of the processes, and the document and the subsequent political system that emerged and evolved through the years.

He goes on to describe "political parties, the President's Cabinet and committee system in Congress" as "effective vehicles for articulating and aggregating the interests of the rich and powerful, the true benefac-

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tors of the New Anglo-Saxon Model." He concludes, "Somehow or other, there is something vulgar and revolting in glorifying a process that heaped undeserved rewards on a segment of the population while oppressing the majority."

The report also proposes, as a further solution to the problem of "White Nationalism" in the curriculum, that more effort be made to expose students to historical heroes from minority cultures. Some of its specific recommendations are astonishing. As an appropriate Hispanic role model, for example, the Sobol team suggests Pedro Albizu Campos, the Puerto Rican nationalist leader whose terrorist group tried to assassinate President Truman in 1950 and shot up the House of Representatives in 1954.

Referring to "Eurocentrism," the report argues that due to "the depth of the problem, only the most stringent measures can have significant impact." Thus it calls for a wholesale revision of textbooks and of the curriculum itself. This process would be overseen by a new branch of the bureaucracy, the office of a "Special Assistant to the Commissioner for Cultural Equity." The mission of this office would be to ensure that "all cultures receive equitable and accurate attention in the educational curriculum and members of all cultures experience excellence in the schools of New York State."

The extremist language of the Sobol group may ultimately prove its undoing. But even if it had come up with a more judiciously phrased document—one less eager to replace "Eurocentrism" with a Third World view of the American experience and less eager to portray America's leaders as villains—it is worth asking whether it is substantively wise for New York to construct a curriculum that seeks to understate the impact of European thought and institutions on American history. Is it wise, moreover, to encourage minority students to feel that the mainstream language and culture of the United States does not belong to them?

It is impossible to deny that America's basic political institutions were created by men steeped in European intellectual traditions. These traditions were essential to the establishment of political democracy on these shores. And in the years since the Founders, immigrants from all over the world have come here because they were attracted by that democracy and the vibrant economy it engendered. This blend produced a genuinely pluralist society—indeed, the very concept of pluralism is itself a product of the European (or "Eurocentric") tradition.

It would be no tragedy, of course, for social studies courses to include an examination of the political values of non-Western traditions, as long as that didn't mean dropping Madison and Jefferson. But it seems silly to deny that many new Americans left regions of the world where other political traditions dominate precisely because these immigrants found non-Western institutions stultifying and oppressive. It is hard not to read the Sobol report—both in its specific recommendations and in its often strident tone—as a call for the school system to inculcate in black students, immigrants, and other minorities resentment and bitterness toward the chief institutions in American life.

The appearance of the Sobol report signals that an ideological struggle currently in progress in many elite universities is about to reach a new battlefield. Until now the struggle has been waged by left-of-center academics who challenge the idea that all students should be exposed to the classics of Western literature and philosophy. In such places as Stanford University, works like *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon, a paean to revolutionary violence, occupy a position in the core curriculum once reserved for the writings of Rousseau and John Stuart Mill. These issues are now to be contested in the domain of taxpayer-funded secondary education.

It is still early to gauge the prospects of the Sobol effort. When it appeared, there was little dissent to the report's tone or findings. Hamilton, its principal author, reports that all members of the Sobol task force signed off on it—that "everyone connected with the effort was very pleased." According to Hamilton, the initial response from New York's Board of Regents, the educational oversight body appointed by the state legislature, was also positive.

As things stand, the Sobol program *will* be implemented—unless major opposition emerges. Before the end of the year, Sobol is supposed to recommend action to the Regents, who will review the commissioner's recommendation in committee and, in January, will vote on whether and how to implement the report.

But changes of the sort that the Sobol report envisages cannot easily be implemented in public schools over the objection of parents and local politicians. It seems likely, for example, that Governor Mario Cuomo will want to distance himself from the Sobol report. Though the report's title is borrowed from one of Cuomo's favorite stump themes—"the politics of inclusion"—its content has little in common with the Governor's views.

It would be a mistake, by the way, to read this controversy in right-left terms. Conservatives are hardly alone in having a stake in the teaching of accurate, balanced history. Moreover, all of society suffers if an educational curriculum is implemented that inadvertently fosters interethnic strife. Finally, it's important to remember the reason the Sobol report was commissioned in the first place: the fact that many blacks and Hispanics are faring poorly in school. The report offers no evidence that the proposed curricular changes would help in this department. It doesn't even offer a theory.

SCOTT MCCONNELL is a member of the editorial board of the *New York Post*. ERIC BREINDEL is the *Post*'s editorial page editor.

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THE 'GLORY' STORY

By James M. McPherson

"Can Movies Teach History?" asks the title of a recent *New York Times* feature article. The answer for *Glory* is yes. It is not only the first feature film to treat the role of black soldiers in the American Civil War; it is also the most powerful and historically accurate movie about that war ever made. If it wins a deserved popularity, it will go far to correct the distortions and romanticizations of such earlier blockbuster films as *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Gone with the Wind*. Celebrating their 50th anniversary on the screen, Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler are still teaching false and stereotyped lessons about slavery and the Civil War to millions of viewers. *Glory* will throw a cold dash of realism over the moonlight-and-magnolias portrayal of the Confederacy. It may also help to restore the courageous image of black soldiers and their white officers that prevailed in the North during the latter war years and early postwar decades, before the process of romanticizing the Old South obscured that image.

Glory tells the story of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry from its organization in the winter of 1863 to the climactic assault of July 18, 1863, against Fort Wagner, a massive earthwork guarding the approach to Charleston. The Union military and naval effort to capture Charleston failed in 1863. So did this assault on Fort Wagner led by the 54th, which suffered nearly 50 percent casualties in the attack. One of them was Col. Robert Gould Shaw, killed while leading his men over the parapet. But if in this narrow sense the attack was a failure, in a more profound sense it was a success of historic proportions. The unflinching behavior of the regiment in the face of an overwhelming hail of lead and iron answered the skeptic's question, "Will the Negro fight?" It demonstrated the manhood and courage of the race to millions of white people in both North and South who had doubted whether black men would stand in combat against soldiers of the self-styled master race.

The events that led to this epochal moment in Afro-American history represented a radical evolution of the scope and purpose of the Civil War. The original war aims of Abraham Lincoln's Administration had been to suppress an insurrection in 11 Southern states and to restore them to their old place in the Union. The North conceived of this as a limited war that would not fundamentally alter the American polity or society—including slavery. Four slave states had remained loyal to the Union. In 1861-62 they would not have supported a war to abolish slavery. Neither would the Democrats, who constituted nearly half of the Northern voters. And the Constitution that the North was fighting to defend guaranteed the protection of slavery in states that wanted it. Therefore, despite Lincoln's personal abhorrence of slavery, he could not willfully turn this war for the Union into a war against slavery. Nor could his War Department accept black volunteers in the Union Army in 1861, for to do so would have sent a signal that this was to be an abolition war.

By 1862, though, it was becoming such a war by the actions of slaves themselves and of the Lincoln Administration and Congress, and by the accelerating momentum of the conflict. It had become a total war, not merely a militia action to suppress insurrection. Thousands of slaves flocked to Union Army posts when Northern troops invaded portions of the South. Abolitionists and radical Republicans insisted that they must be granted freedom. The success of Confederate military offensives in 1862 convinced Republicans, including Lincoln, that the North could not win the war without mobilizing all its resources and striking against Southern resources used to sustain the Confederate war effort. The most important such resource was slavery, for slaves constituted the majority of the South's labor force. In the summer of 1862 Congress enacted legislation confiscating the property of Confederates, including slaves. Lincoln followed this with the Emancipation Proclamation to free the slaves, invoking his power as commander in chief to seize enemy property used to wage war against the United States. The Proclamation also stated that blacks would be "received into the armed services of the United States."

These events underlay the decision of Governor John Andrew of Massachusetts to organize a black reg-

JAMES M. MCPHERSON is the author of *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford University Press), which won the Pulitzer Prize for history in 1989.

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iment, which became the 54th Massachusetts. A bold experiment, black soldiers could be made acceptable in the context of the time only if they were commanded by white officers. Andrew was determined to appoint officers "of firm antislavery principles . . . superior to a vulgar contempt for color." In Robert Gould Shaw, son of a prominent abolitionist family, he found his man. As black volunteers came into training camp near Boston during the spring of 1863, Shaw shaped them into a high-morale outfit eager to prove their mettle.

In May 1863 the 54th completed its training and marched through Boston to embark for the front (a scene nicely depicted in *Glory*). About the same time the *New York Tribune*, the leading Northern newspaper and a supporter of arming blacks to fight for the Union and freedom, observed that most Yankees now endorsed that radical policy, but many still wondered whether blacks would make good soldiers. "Loyal whites have generally become willing that they should fight," declared a *Tribune* editorial, "but the great majority have no faith that they will do so. Many hope they will prove cowards and sneaks—others greatly fear it."

THE CHARGE AT FORT WAGNER, JULY 18, 1863
LITHOGRAPH BY CURRIER & IVES (THE BETTMANN ARCHIVES)

The 54th was not the first black regiment organized, or the first to see combat. To test the waters on this issue, the War Department quietly allowed Union commanders of forces occupying portions of the lower Mississippi Valley, the Kansas-Missouri border, and the South Carolina sea islands to begin organizing black regiments in the fall of 1862. Four of these regiments had fought in actions connected with the Vicksburg campaign during May and June 1863, winning plaudits for their performance. But these events had received little publicity in the Northern press.

The recruitment of black combat troops was still regarded as a risky experiment when the 600 men of the 54th moved out at dusk on July 18 to the attack on Fort Wagner. During the next few hours they more than justified the experiment. Forced by the ocean on one side and swamps on the other to approach the fort along several hundred yards of narrow beach, the regiment moved forward steadily through bursting shells and murderous musketry, losing men every step of the way but continuing right up the ramparts and breaching the parapet before the immense strength of the works stopped them. (The portrayal of this attack in *Glory* is the most realistic combat footage in any Civil War movie I have seen.)

A war correspondent for the *New York Tribune* vividly described the battle to Northern newspaper readers. The 54th's attack did more than prove that Fort Wagner was impregnable to infantry assault; it disabused hundreds of thousands of Northerners of their stereotypes. "Who asks now in doubt and derision, 'Will the Negro fight?' " commented one abolitionist. "The answer is spoken from the cannon's mouth . . . it comes to us from . . . those graves beneath Fort Wagner's walls, which the American people will surely never forget." "Through the cannon smoke of the dark night," said the *Atlantic Monthly*, "the manhood of the colored race shines before many eyes that would not see." For the *New York Tribune*, the assault resolved any lingering doubts: "It made Fort Wagner such a name to the colored race as Bunker Hill had been for ninety years to the white Yankees."

White officers of the 54th represented the elite of New England society. Some, including Shaw, were Harvard alumni and sons of prominent families. Several—also including Shaw—were combat veterans of white regiments during the first two years of the war. Anti-slavery in conviction, they had willingly risked stigma and ridicule to cast their lot with a black regiment. Shaw's death made a deeper impression on Yankee culture than that of any of the other 35,000 men from New England killed in the Civil War. The clergyman Henry Ward Beecher wrote that Shaw's martyrdom had regenerated Boston's past glory as America's cradle of freedom: "Our young men seemed ignoble; the faith of old heroic times had died . . . but the trumpet of this war sounded the call and Oh! how joyful has been the sight of such unexpected nobleness in our young men." Ralph Waldo Emerson and James Russell Lowell extolled Shaw in verse. Lowell wrote:

> Right in the van,
> On the red rampart's slippery swell,
> With heart that beat a charge, he fell
> Foeward, as fits a man;
> But the high soul burns on to light men's feet
> Where death for noble ends makes dying sweet.

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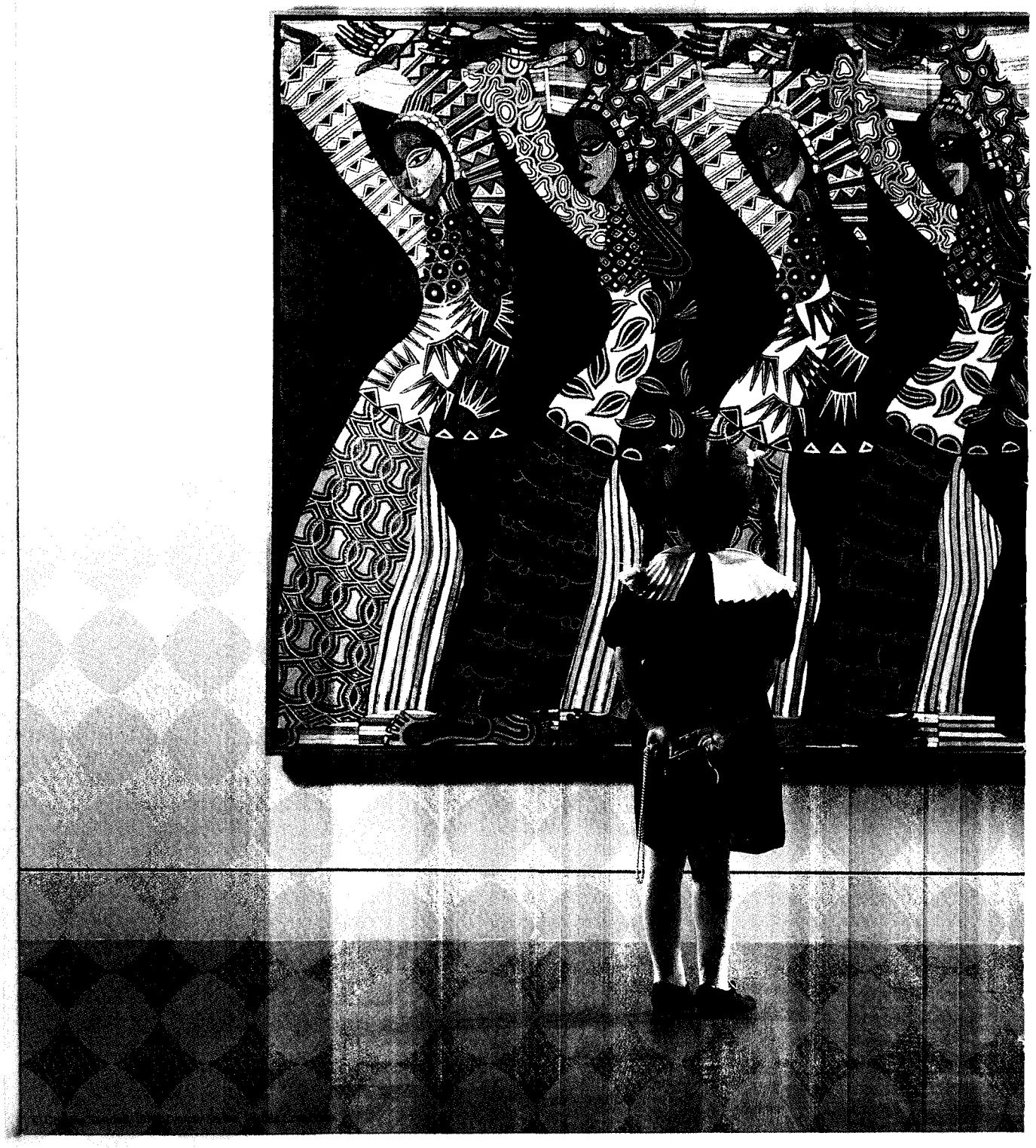

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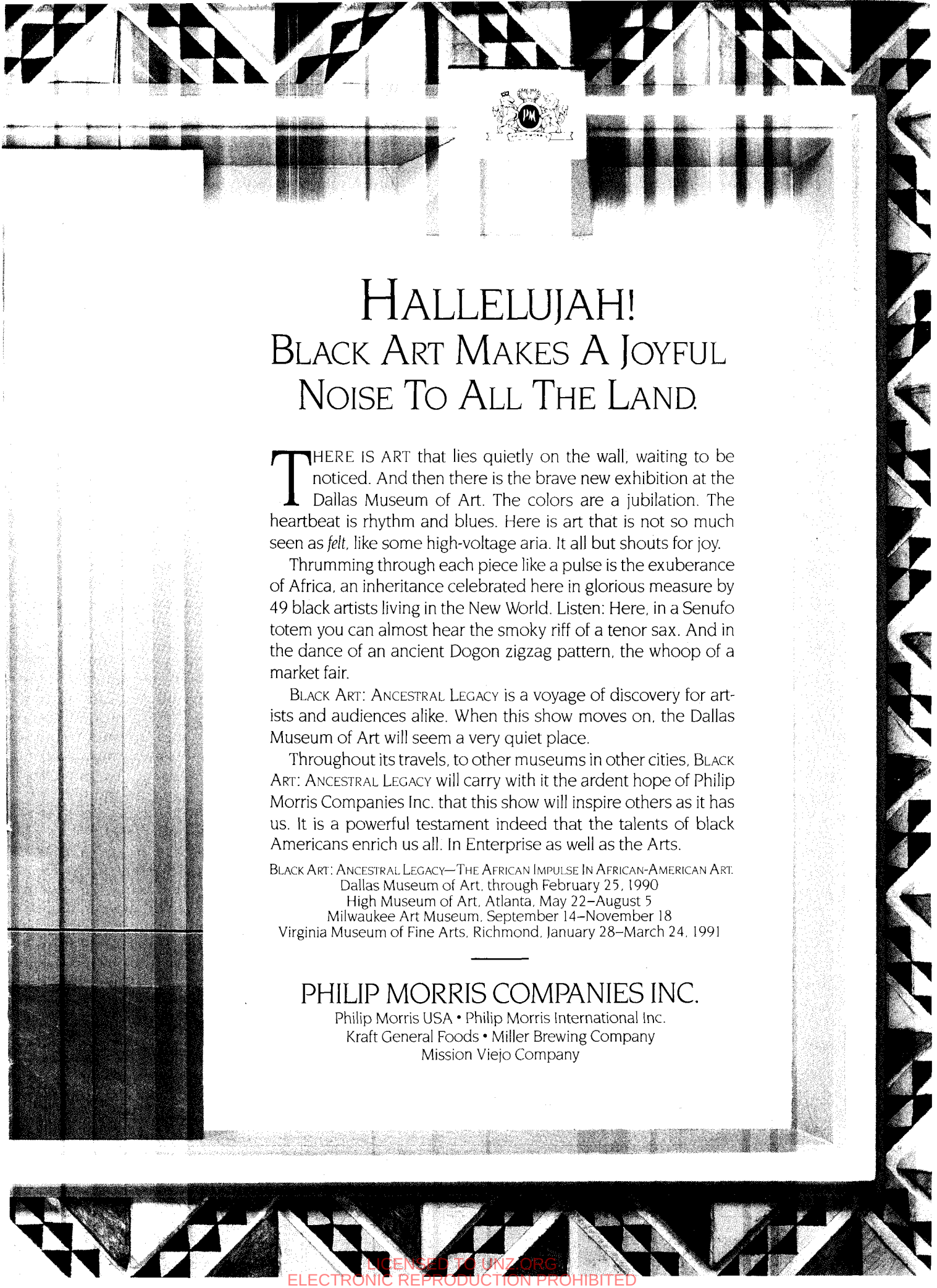

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The Confederate defenders of Fort Wagner stripped Shaw's body and dumped it into an unmarked mass grave with the bodies of the men of the regiment who had been killed in the attack. When the Union commander sent a flag of truce across the lines a day later to request the return of Shaw's body (a customary practice for high-ranking officers killed in the Civil War), a Confederate officer replied contemptuously, "We have buried him with his niggers." This produced bitterness as well as more poetry in the North, the best of which was perhaps these lines by an obscure bard:

They buried him with his niggers!
A wide grave should it be.
They buried more in that shallow trench
Than human eye could see.
Ay, all the shames and sorrows
of more than a hundred years
Lie under the weight of that Southern soil
Despite those cruel sneers.

Several weeks after the battle, Union forces finally occupied Fort Wagner after a punishing naval bombardment had compelled the Confederates to evacuate it. When a Union officer offered to search for Shaw's grave to recover his body, Shaw's father wrote an eloquent letter to stop the enterprise: "We hold that a soldier's most appropriate burial-place is on the field where he has fallen." The most fitting marker for Shaw and the soldiers of the 54th is Augustus St. Gaudens's superb bas-relief sculpture on Boston Common showing Shaw in the foreground on his horse while his soldiers march alongside with shouldered rifles and heads held high in pride—surely the noblest of the thousands of Civil War monuments in this country.

The apotheosis of Shaw and his men in July 1863 came just after the terrible four-day draft riot in New York City. The riot had been fueled in part by the hostility of Irish-Americans to blacks and to being drafted to fight in a war to free the slaves, who they feared would come North to compete for jobs and social space. Black New Yorkers were the chief victims of the rioters. On July 15 the mob beat to death the nephew of one of the 54th's sergeants, Robert Simmons; three days later Simmons was mortally wounded in the attack on Fort Wagner.

The draft riot occurred in the context of opposition by Northern Democrats to the Lincoln Administration's war policies, including emancipation, black soldiers, and the draft. Democrats had done much to stir up the racial hatreds manifested by the rioters, who chanted the anti-war and anti-black slogans of the "Copperhead" wing of the party. Few Republican commentators failed to juxtapose the draft riot with the heroic conduct of the 54th at Fort Wagner, and to point to the moral: black men who fought for the Union deserve more respect than white men who rioted against it.

Lincoln himself made this point in a public letter to a political meeting in August 1863, which was reprinted in nearly every Northern newspaper. "Some of the commanders of our armies in the field who have given us our most important successes," wrote Lincoln, "believe the emancipation policy, and the use of colored troops, constitute the heaviest blow yet dealt to the rebellion." This was a reference to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, who in a recent letter to Lincoln had endorsed the value of black regiments. Addressing himself to anti-emancipation Democrats, Lincoln continued: "You say you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you," that is, for the Union.

The performance of the 54th at Fort Wagner not only advanced the liberation of slaves; it also helped to liberate Lincoln from the constitutional and political constraints that had earlier inhibited the President from making this war for the Union a war against slavery—an institution that Lincoln had often branded a "monstrous injustice." In a moving peroration of this public letter written a month after Fort Wagner, Lincoln wrote that when final victory brought a new birth of freedom to the re-United States, "there will be some black men who can remember that, with silent tongue, and clenched teeth, and steady eye, and well-poised bayonet, they have helped mankind on to this great consummation; while, I fear, there will be some white ones, unable to forget that, with malignant heart, and deceitful speech, they have strove to hinder it."

Glory does not go into detail about the impact of the battle of Fort Wagner on Northern opinion; it is sketchy on the political context of the black soldier issue; it does not mention the draft riot. The 54th continued to serve through the war, fighting in several more battles and skirmishes. The movie, though, ends with the attack on Fort Wagner. That is appropriate, for Shaw is the central figure in the film. His death makes a fitting climax to the drama whose tensions build steadily to that moment of consummation. If the 54th had done nothing else in the war, this would have elevated it to the deserved status of most famous of the 166 black regiments in the Union Army. If it is not literally true, as the caption appearing on the screen at the end of the movie would have it, that the bravery of the 54th at Fort Wagner caused Congress to authorize more black regiments—that had happened months earlier—the example of the 54th did help to transform experiment into policy. It also helped to earn a front-line combat role for many other black regiments instead of the rear-area role as service and labor battalions that had been their original purpose. A central theme of *Glory* is Shaw's determined fight to win a combat assignment for the 54th, so it can earn respect for black manhood and overcome the stereotype of shiftless, cowering, comic darkies.

Glory portrays this theme with sensitivity and dramatic power—even though many scenes and charac-

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ters that convey it are fictional. This raises the question posed by Richard Bernstein's *Times* article "Can Movies Teach History?" He observes that "more people are getting their history, or what they think is history, from the movies these days than from the standard history books." For every person who has read one of the several excellent histories of black soldiers in the Civil War, a hundred or more will see this movie. That being true, does "the filmmaker, like the novelist, have license to use the material of history selectively and partially in the goal of entertaining, creating a good dramatic product, even forging what is sometimes called the poetic truth, a truth truer than the literal truth?" asks Bernstein. In other words, "Does it matter if the details are wrong if the underlying meaning of events is accurate?"

Glory does confront the literal-minded historian with this question on several occasions. Most of the details are right. And when they are wrong, there is often a rational explanation that minimizes the distortion. Knowledgeable viewers will note that in the movie the 54th charges *southward* against Fort Wagner, with the Atlantic ocean on its left, when in reality the assault went northward. The reason is the configuration of the Georgia beach where the set of Fort Wagner was built, which required a southward assault. Does it really matter?

Some errors in the film are inexplicable, though, because they seem to serve no purpose. The 54th began organizing in February 1863, not three months earlier. In his brief cameo role, black leader Frederick Douglass is presented as a venerable sage whose screen appearance is modeled on a photograph taken a quarter century later when Douglass was in his 70s instead of the vigorous 45 he was in 1863. The real Robert Gould Shaw received the offer of command of the 54th by letter from Governor Andrew borne by his father to Shaw in winter camp with his regiment (the 2nd Massachusetts) in Virginia. Rob discussed it earnestly with his father, wrestled with his conscience overnight, declined, then changed his mind a day later and accepted. In the movie, Shaw is attending an elegant drawing-room party in Boston while on furlough when Andrew offers the command; without a pause, Shaw accepts. Literal history in this case would seem to have offered greater dramatic possibilities for getting at a deeper truth than the cinematic version.

Except for Shaw, the principal characters in the film are fictional: there was no real Maj. Cabot Forbes; no Emerson-quoting black boyhood friend of Shaw's named Thomas Searles; no tough Irish Sergeant-Major Mulcahy; no black Sergeant and father-figure John Rawlins; no brash, hardened Private Trip. Indeed, there is a larger fiction involved here. The movie gives the impression that most of the 54th's soldiers were former slaves. But in fact, the regiment was recruited mainly in the North and most of the men had always been free. Some of them came from prominent Northern black families; two of Frederick Douglass's sons were among the first to sign up. The older son, Lewis, was sergeant-major of the regiment from the start. The young adjutant of the regiment, wounded in the assault on Fort Wagner, was Garth Wilkinson James, brother of William and Henry James. A dramatic and important story about the relationship of Northern blacks to slavery and the war, and about the wartime ideals of New England culture, could have been constructed from a cast of real, historical figures. The story also might have included Sergeant Simmons, his nephew, and the draft riot.

But the story that producer Freddie Fields, director Edward Zwick, and screenwriter Kevin Jarre chose to tell is equally important—and, in that sense of "the underlying meaning of events," equally true. This is a film not simply about the 54th Massachusetts, but about blacks in the Civil War. Most of the 178,000 black soldiers (and 10,000 black sailors) were slaves until a few months, even a few days, before they joined up. They fought for their freedom, for the freedom of their families, their people. This was the most revolutionary feature of a war that wrought a revolutionary transformation in America by freeing four million slaves and uprooting the social structure of half the country. Arms in the hands of slaves had been the nightmare of Southern whites for generations. In 1863 the nightmare came true. It achieved a new dignity, self-respect, and militancy for the former slaves who fought for the Union. It helped them achieve equal citizenship and political rights—for a time—after the war.

That is the real story told by *Glory*. That is why most of the soldiers are depicted as former slaves. It is a story of their transformation from an oppressed to a proud people. It is a story told skillfully through several of the fictional events in the film—the incident of the racist quartermaster who initially refuses to distribute shoes to Shaw's men; the punishment of Trip by whipping for going AWOL; the regiment's dramatic refusal on principle to accept less pay than white soldiers, which launched an ultimately successful movement to shame Congress into equalizing the pay of black soldiers (this actually happened, but at Shaw's initiative, not Trip's); the religious meeting the night before the assault on Fort Wagner.

It is a story told symbolically in one of the most surreal and, at first glance, irrelevant scenes in the movie, when Shaw gallops his horse along a path flanked by stakes, each with a watermelon (in February in Massachusetts?) jammed on its top. Shaw slashes right and left with his sword slicing and smashing every watermelon. The point becomes clear when we recall the identification of watermelons with the darky stereotype. If the image of smashed watermelons in *Glory* can replace that of moonlight and magnolias in *Gone with the Wind* as America's cinematic version of the Civil War, it will be a great gain for truth. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Comrades in Arms

On Boston Common in 1897 the city dedicated a monument by Augustus St. Gaudens to Col. Robert Gould Shaw and the men of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. It was a black regiment in the Union Army, and he was their white commander. He and nearly half of his men were killed in the assault on Fort Wagner, near Fort Sumter, in July 1863. William James spoke at the monument's dedication:

> The republic to which Robert Shaw and a quarter of a million like him were faithful unto death is no republic that can live at ease hereafter on the interest of what they have won. Democracy is still upon trial.

Then James specified the institutional and commercial comforts that cannot "save us from degeneration if the inner mystery is lost."

In 1963, the 100th anniversary of Fort Wagner, Robert Lowell wrote "For the Union Dead," a wintry view of the monument and the city, a wintrier view of the fate of James's "inner mystery." Cold practicalities have chilled the spirit; change has flooded through Boston, even through the Common, where a huge garage is being excavated and where the poet sees

> Colonel Shaw
> and his bell-cheeked Negro infantry
> on St. Gaudens' shaking Civil War relief,
> propped by a plank splint against the
> garage's earthquake.

The change is more than physical. Surveying the grubby scene and breathing the altered air, Lowell writes: "Their monument sticks like a fishbone / in the city's throat."

To refresh us about the inner mystery, to celebrate the fire of the past—thus inevitably to imply the ironies of what followed—some gifted people have made **Glory** (Tri-Star). The film tells the story of Shaw, a 24-year-old captain when he was wounded at Antietam in 1862, who was commissioned to form the 54th Massachusetts of black volunteers and to lead them: and the story of that regiment through its formation, its training, its harassments within the Union Army itself, its first engagements, to Fort Wagner. The film has a major and a minor flaw; nonetheless it is powerful—poignant in detail and, more importantly, in spirit.

The producer, Freddie Fields, was apparently the originating force behind the enterprise and apparently deserves much credit for the fact that *Glory* is not a mere exploitation of a historical circumstance with modern relevance, not a made-for-TV thesis tract, but an authentic, patient, bloody, and moving work. The screenplay by Kevin Jarre is based on two books, *Lay This Laurel* by Lincoln Kirstein (yes, that Kirstein) and *One Gallant Rush* by Peter Burchard. Also, there are several quotations from Shaw's letters to his parents, read on the sound track by Matthew Broderick, who plays Shaw.

The cinematographer was Freddie Francis, the Englishman who did *Sons and Lovers* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and who fixes surely the visual quality that certifies each scene—some sequences in pouring rain, for instance, and a deadly battle in the woods where the dewy freshness of the air makes the fight more terrible. The easy comparison for Francis's work is with Mathew Brady's, but I think this is off kilter, not because Brady shot in black and white but because Francis works with a history of photography behind him, a history that is in the viewer's eye as well. This was not available to the relative newcomer Brady. Francis's realism, in carefully graded colors, is not Brady's magnificent, ever-surprising journalism but unobtrusively sophisticated art.

The director was Edward Zwick, whose only previous theater feature was the amusing *About Last Night . . .* and who was one of the creators of the TV series "thirtysomething." Whoever it was—Fields, I suppose—who took a chance on Zwick, to direct a film that was several universes away from what he had previously done, should be congratulated. The decision had to be something of a risk, but by and large, *Glory* proves that it was right.

The very first sequence sets the tone and texture: a series of shots of a Union Army camp, with soldiers lounging, laundering, playing, and so on—with no sound except the film music. Zwick wanted to do more than establish period, he wanted to show at once the men within the history, show them realistically but with a hint of reverence. Aided by his editor Steven Rosenblum, whose skill becomes more and more impres-

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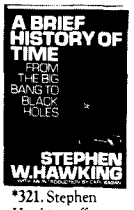

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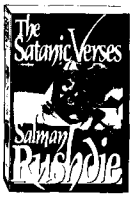

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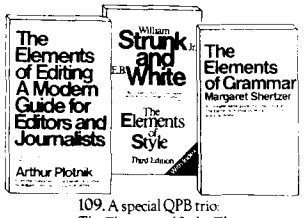
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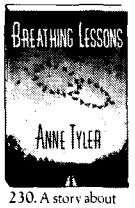

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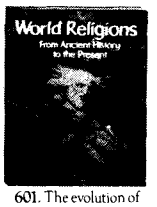

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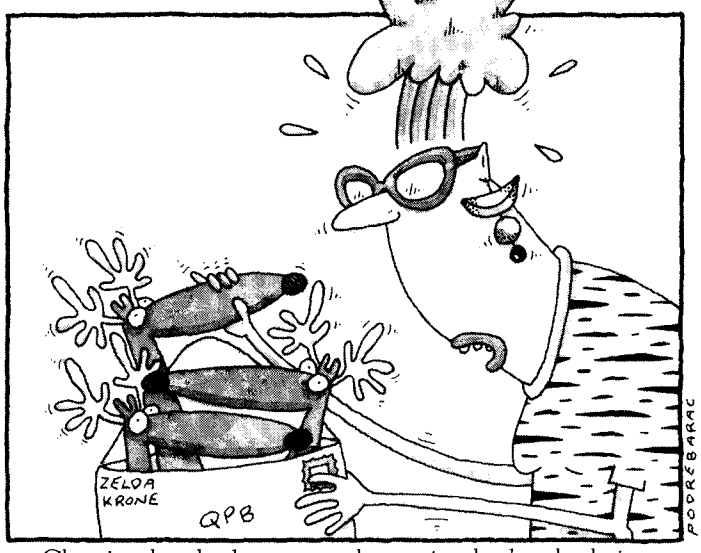

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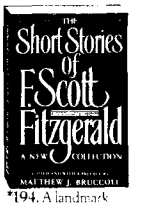

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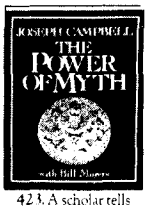

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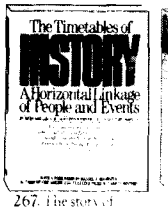

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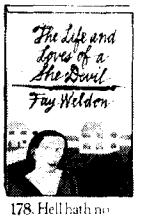

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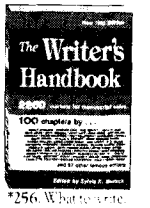

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sive as complications follow, Zwick stamps the opening moments with grave simplicity.

Antietam, the enlistment of the blacks, the vicissitudes of the training camp, Zwick handles them all firmly. A few time lapses jar. But his intimate scenes, in the soldiers' tents, catch the abutment of differing men; his encounters between officers have the right edge of rivalry under the discipline; his battle scenes have the special horror of the Civil War. Anyone who has visited the battlefields has seen the appalling *closeness* of the opposing lines. (For some of the spectacular scenes, Zwick had the participation of Civil War buffs, who regularly re-enact occasions in that history.)

All but one of the cast are excellent. Jarre has written four principal black roles, soldiers in the regiment who epitomize much of conditions before the war and of what is now happening around them. Zwick has cast the parts wisely and has helped his actors. Andre Braugher as the well-educated Boston black who is the first to volunteer; redoubtable Morgan Freeman as the seasoned, wise ex-slave; Jihmi Kennedy as the country boy, candid and sweet, whose previous shooting experience has been squirrel hunting (although he squints the wrong eye when he aims his rifle!); and, the boldest of the four, Denzel Washington as the runaway slave with the whip-scarred back, proud and full of hate, who enlisted without illusion and fights with a kind of relief. All these are vivid men, not the trite composites of an army-film group. Cary Elwes, as the white officer who is second in command, incises a man struggling with a new idea and mastering it.

But the casting of Broderick as Colonel Shaw, unlike the choice of Zwick to direct, is a gamble that fails. Broderick, trying hard, has neither the style nor the weight for the role. He is the only one on whom a uniform looks like a costume. He misses the quintessence of the role—the son of Boston Brahmin abolitionists who feels noblesse oblige to put his life at the service of his beliefs. Lowell says of him:

> He rejoices in man's lovely,
> peculiar power to choose life and die—
> when he leads his black soldiers to death,
> he cannot bend his back.

Broderick conveys little of this quality.

Less important but quite unhelpful is James Horner's music. Mostly it repeats one theme in numerous variations; occasionally a swelling boys' choir is added. The economical strength of the film itself has at times to withstand assault from the lush sound track.

The core of the film is the black men's eagerness to fight. What they suspect is that the regiment has been formed merely to provide a labor force. These soldiers have struggled to become free men—most of them are ex-slaves—and they want the double chance: to affirm their manhood and to strike at the kingdom of slavery they have escaped.

Possibly the film's best achievement is in making credible this urgency to fight. If you have ever seen a modern audience, particularly of young people, at an older film in which men talk about wanting to fight in a war and being willing, if need be, to die, you will know how extraordinary it is that Zwick and colleagues make the soldiers' sentiments compelling.

Glory contains no scenes of battle as glory: it is all brutal killing with gun and bayonet. The film isn't warmongering; it's the depiction of oppressed men with the means at hand to end oppression. That the Civil War ended slavery but not racial injustice—something foreseen by Trip, the bitterly percipient Denzel Washington character—is not a reproof of the 54th Massachusetts but of what came after. (Trip would have agreed with Walt Whitman, who admired the black troops that he saw and said, "The Negro will get his due from the Negro—from no one else.")

After the Fort Wagner battle, the Confederates showed their contempt for Shaw, the white officer who led black troops, by throwing his body in a common ditch with his soldiers. (A touch too neatly, Trip's body falls next to his.) History tells us that, later on, when disinterment was proposed, Shaw's father declined. Lowell again:

> Shaw's father wanted no monument
> except the ditch,
> where his son's body was thrown
> and lost with his "niggers."

Mark Stevens on Art

Church's Church

The catalog of the Frederic Church show at the National Gallery in Washington contains a wonderful photograph that recalls the original installation, in 1859, of *Heart of the Andes*. This spectacular landscape painting, which includes everything from the tiniest birds to the most distant mountains, and ranges from the green heat of the tropics to the blue chill of mountain snow, was set into an imposing wooden edifice so that viewers could indulge the illusion of looking through a window into the landscape. On either side some drapes were pulled back, giving the impression also of a stage. Portraits (not by Church) of three American Presidents rose above the painting like a benediction. In the center was George the Father.

Contemporary accounts report that the lighting in the room was kept low, except on the painting, and that visitors spoke in whispers. Some brought opera glasses. It cost a quarter to see this picture; the show was, among other things, a big commercial hit, taking in more than $3,000 during its three-week run and proving popular with a broad spectrum of the public. Most who came spoke of the experience in reverential tones, for the setting of the painting not only resembled a window and a theater but also an altar from which one might, under the presiding spirit of the Presidential patriarchs, worship Nature in the New World.

Although they have removed some of the funkier stuff, notably the drapes and the Presidents, the organizers of the exhibition in Washington have nonetheless fashioned an evocative re-creation of this original setting. One can almost see the picture as Americans did around the time of the Civil War. And the truly marvelous and complicated thing is that one hardly knows whether to laugh or to fall to one's knees. Without question the picture (which belongs to the Metropolitan Museum in New York) has miraculous elements: the progression of tone, the rendering of detail, the layering of space from near to far, and above all, the godlike sensation that one has been invited to the Creation. At the same time the painting is show-biz, kitsch, greedy for detail, anxious to impress, overproud of its spirituality, and painfully innocent.

In other words, made in America. Church is a great but powerfully flawed artist; and the ways in which he is flawed, no less than those in which he excelled, help make him one of the essential Americans. He is as important in this symbolic way as any 19th-century American writer. He presumed to create a new world and, in doing so, he seemed to bring together every important vice and virtue in the American soul.

A student of Thomas Cole, who taught that landscape must convey an idea as well as portray a fact, Church began by imitating his master's work. Like Cole, he

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is part of the Romantic moment in painting, though he differs in important respects from the European seekers of the sublime. From the first he was remarkably talented, the most technically gifted votary of the Hudson River School. He quickly mastered the characteristic elements of 19th-century American landscape painting, notably its fascination with both matter and spirit. On the one hand, itsy-bitsy details, possessed like pennies; on the other, a controlling, pervasive light that dissolves fact into a kind of spiritual aura.

Church was a typical amalgam of explorer, scientist, promoter, and preacher. What is remarkable is how far, and how hard, he pushed the great American themes. A painting by Cole might portray the New World in a state of Edenic innocence, but it looks like a European painting; it is safe, in good taste, respectful of convention, the reverie of an English gentleman. Church, by contrast, had small patience for limits of any kind. A vastly restless artist, he had close and obvious ties to the transcendentalism of his time. But his spiritual questing seemed larger, less tasteful, more imperial than anything found among the austere trees and rocks of New England. Even Church's simplest, most tactful early work seems ruder and more immediate than anything in Cole's art. *The Natural Bridge, Virginia* (1852), a picture of a famous rock formation, shows a man and a woman in a ravine crossed by the bridge. The man is gesturing at the woman, who is seated on a rock. At first glance the painting is an unexceptionable portrayal of nature's divine hand, except that the man appears to be black, the woman white. There is a subtle but unmistakable trace of utopianism here. In America, Church may be proposing, a natural bridge will connect the races. In 1852 that was a radical allegory of nature.

Every element of Church's art seems born of intense pressure. We do not just see many details, precisely rendered, we sense an encyclopedic ambition to include all the facts of the New World. There is never any relaxation in the art of description: Church displays the responsibility of the taxonomist and the avidity of the miser. Much the same is true of his presentation of distance. Foreground, middle distance, and horizon do not quite seem sufficient. He must possess *every* kind of space, including that which is beyond our ken.

In a way, Church became one of the great engineer-artists, not unlike the wonderful bridge builders of 19th-century America, who also set out to possess unreachable spaces. It is obviously technically difficult—more than difficult, nearly impossible—to convey boundlessness on a two-dimensional rectangular canvas in a way that even approximates our sensation of limitless space in real life. Yet it remains one of Church's great obsessions, and he solved it in a painting of Niagara Falls, for example, by placing the viewer in a strange, really impossible spot, somewhat above the falls and over the water. He preserved the "idea" of the falls—what everyone went to Niagara to see—by the recalculation of the facts from a new perspective.

He would do almost anything to find a perspective that could surprise the eye into innocence. I don't like the early painting *Above the Clouds at Sunrise* (1849) very much—it looks overly calculated, too obviously composed for effect—but I nonetheless find it unforgettable, a view from a mountain height that enables us to look *down* at the clouds. And also *up* at other clouds, and *at* still other clouds lingering among the trees at eye level. As with *Niagara*, Church does not clearly root us on the ground. He prefers the view from up in the air. Accustomed as we are to staring through the windows of planes, this might seem like nothing much. To viewers of his time, however, Church's picture offered a true bird's-eye view—as if one might, at any moment, float off into the pink empyrean.

As an explorer, Church seemed interested only in the ends of the earth. The mountains and the wilds of North Ameri-

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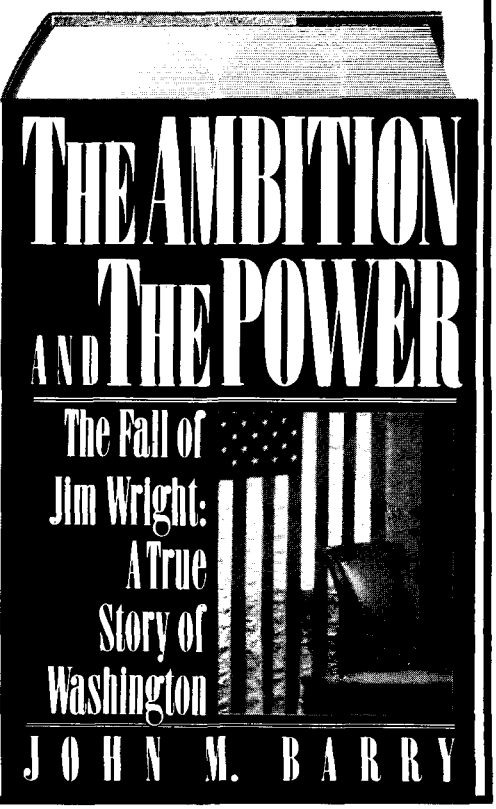

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ca could not satisfy him for long. They had already been recorded, which represented both a symbolic violation of their innocence and a diminution of their imaginative scale. To find America, or the idea of America, Church had to wander, like Melville, far from home. And so he did an amazing thing for an artist of the period: he turned his back on Italy. He went instead to South America. It was there that he set out to discover facts still fresh enough to suit the purity of his idea. Stephen Jay Gould has a fascinating essay in the catalog that discusses, among other things, the influence of Alexander von Humboldt on the painter. Humboldt, today almost forgotten, was perhaps the most famous intellectual of his day. He wrote vividly of his travels to South America, finding no necessary quarrel between feeling and science in his study of nature. He doted on botanical diversity, yet felt assured of some higher unity—and Church seemed devoted to his work. The painter even intended to send *Heart of the Andes* to Europe so the aging Romantic could see it.

Church followed in Humboldt's footsteps by traveling to the tropics. The landscape of Peru was particularly suited to Humboldt's conviction that the natural world is a living unity, because the privileged eye could take in, at a single glance, everything from crowded jungle to snow-capped peaks. It made possible the portrayal in a unified composition of the entire range of nature. Yet Church's decision to go to South America also expressed certain other radical choices. Europe represented historical time, the accumulations of tradition, the lessons of past genius. South of the equator, Church hoped to create paintings that stood outside time, outside tradition—paintings artless enough to represent a New World. Although he could paint brilliant oil sketches on the spot, Church reconstituted his big landscapes in the studio to bring them into line with his Romantic aspirations. As with *Niagara*, he played engineer with the facts in the hope of encouraging the viewer to make the imaginative and spiritual leap.

What Church did to color was particularly extreme. His pictures ought to sicken the eye, but miraculously one doesn't recoil in disgust from his lurid rosy-pink palette. In reproduction, the colors lose some intensity, making the paintings look too much like calendar art. Seen on the wall the color in his good pictures is much too strange, and controlled, for schlock. Church's greatest painting is probably the Cleveland Museum's *Twilight in the Wilderness* (1860), a view of a spectacular sunset over lake and mountain. It should not work. The glow over the mountains is made of lemon sherbet. The pinks are cotton candy. The greens curdle into darkness. The light comes from a bulb behind the painting.

Yet Church carries it off—and it is partly the chances taken, the borderline taste, that convince. For this is painting that aspires to a spiritual ecstasy, and restraint has no place around ecstasy. How can you be tasteful when you are trying to displace reality into some higher, more exalted state of feeling? Taste is shaming, the solace of the civilized and the reasonable. Taste is Henry James, a master who would probably have found Church dreadful. Part of growing up as an American, however, is learning not to fear Henry James.

The *Twilight* picture also succeeds because, in addition to its extreme colors and great swaths of cloud, it has a simplicity rarely found in a typical Church showstopper. The line drawn against the lemon sherbet sky by the distant violet mountains is breathtakingly modest: a lovely, gentle touch that persuades the eye that the artist is not just showing off. The painting can successfully evoke the silent splendor of dusk because Church is not noisily calling attention to himself. Church's orchestration is in the service of silence.

Few of Church's big paintings have the purity of *Twilight*, which really seems innocent, prelapsarian. Most of his other works display some confusion between spiritual grandeur and crowd pleasing, between a feeling of awe and an imperial desire to possess. This may be the inevitable result of trying to create a church that has no place for sin. For make no mistake, Church was a religious painter, and in a way that differs markedly from the European Romantics. For example, he does not allow the sublime to become a merely private matter, in the way that Turner's art always seems personal. Church was public-minded. He wanted a congregation. Yet, in contrast to a religious Romantic like Friedrich, he displays no melancholy sense of man fallen.

Because the cathedral that Church made of Nature contains no dogma, no collective sense of the Fall, it fails to convey any feeling of restraint. The individual artist begins to play God too presumptuously. He treats everything with divine equality. He is interested in all creation from the smallest rock to the most distant mountain. Human narrative, with its picking and choosing and moral quandaries, seems beneath real notice. One will sometimes come across a tiny human being in a Church painting, but only after looking at other things first; and the little humans in the pictures only ratify the vast scale. This has the effect of making the artist himself appear too big. He ends by making a spectacle of the soul. He becomes a master of the silly sublime. By all accounts Church himself was a very intelligent man, but he lacked the saving bitterness of Melville and Twain, who knew about both paradise and its discontents. Twain had both Tom and Huck, Melville understood American hypocrisy as well as innocence.

Church made himself blind to the Fall, which accounts for the fairy-tale charm of some paintings, as overbaked as they may be. Still, we forgive Church most of his excesses, because he so desperately wanted it all to be true. In no other American artist is there so little traction between fact and idea. In these pictures, ideas slide into facts and facts into ideas; nature is metaphysics. Or, to put it differently, Church will not accept that the New World is also the modern world, pulled in contrary directions. If the space can be made big enough, it will melt all contradictions in rapture.

The exaggerations in Church can be touching, for he is the last of his kind, an American dinosaur. His art reminds me of those extravagant wild West shows that toured the country shortly after the West itself was tamed. Church must exaggerate to convince both himself and his audience. He is defending an idea of America that is increasingly indefensible. He devised a radical art in a conservative cause: his work is the aftermath, not the beginning. It is all right to laugh at him, but the laugh should include some feeling of regret. The ending itself was particularly sad. One of the impressive things about Church is that he did not feel inferior to Europe. How honorable for an artist with his sensibility to go from North to South America without a Mediterranean interlude! He genuinely believed in the New World. But in the end he did go to Europe, and like everyone else, he painted the Parthenon. His late European pictures represent a kind of defeat, an unconscious recognition that America must finally join, and not supplant, the old world. Henry James wins in the end.

Downstairs from the exhibit at the National Gallery, there is a fine display of the snow scenes of the American Impressionist John Twachtman. After the huge pink extravaganza of Church, these small paintings seem like a soothing eyewash. In a similar way, it must have been a relief to forget Church after he died in 1900. He had no place in modernism. For about 60 years his work disappeared, and he was completely overlooked. Now he is the rage again. Oddly enough, everyone has been right all along. He is great, he is embarrassing, he must be forgotten, he should be remembered. •

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The secret life of Elias Canetti.

Dreams of Disappearance

By Edward Rothstein

On a trip to Morocco, Elias Canetti was attracted again and again to the great square in the middle of Marrakesh. It was not the bustle of haggling merchants or the sights of starving camels that drew his attention, but a small brown bundle huddling on the ground—a bundle "consisting not even of a voice but of a single sound." The bundle produced a drawn out buzzing "e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e" that just went on and on, audible beneath all the cries of the square.

Canetti saw neither the mouth that produced this sound, nor any part of the face, nor the body, just a hooded cloak and a shapeless mass. He did not know whether the creature was tall or short, whether it was carried to its begging place in the square or walked there on its own, whether it had arms with which to pick up the coins tossed on the ground. Canetti felt helpless before it, not because of imagined horrors of deformity, but because he felt there was something sacred about the bundle, which he called the "unseen"; he could not unveil or approach it. He imagined that the unremitting vowel sound was Allah's name called out by a tongueless mouth. And what he felt, most peculiarly, was pride: "I was proud of the bundle because it was alive." It persisted, reappeared, never silent, producing its diligent mournful cry.

Canetti is a peculiar writer, not least because it is possible to imagine him seeking that bundle not just in Marrakesh but wherever his wanderings took him. He is the traveler determinedly selecting the "unseen" and the "tongueless" from the voices surrounding him in the marketplace, picking out the crippled call from the badgering, begging voices. This gives him a peculiar perspective, a view of the world that elevates the eccentric and denigrates the familiar, that despises those who would make their way through the world on ordinary terms and honors those who are hobbled by it but pursue within themselves an unseen, unheard quest.

Canetti peoples his books with such figures: an aging Sinologist who disdains humanity and lives only for the sake of his 25,000-book library, a paraplegic philosopher who reads by turning pages with his tongue, a disturbed widow who in a nightly ritual solemnly licks the back of photos of her late husband, a five-year-old boy who chases his young cousin with an ax intending to kill her because she won't show him her school notebooks. Only the first of these is a fictional creation. The others are characters in his memoirs. The last was Canetti himself.

The Secret Heart of the Clock: Notes, Aphorisms, Fragments 1973-1985
by Elias Canetti
translated by Joel Agee
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 151 pp., $19.95)

The Tongue Set Free: Remembrance of a European Childhood
by Elias Canetti
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(Farrar, Straus & Giroux,
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The Torch in My Ear
by Elias Canetti
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384 pp., $16.50, $9.95 paper)

The Play of the Eyes
by Elias Canetti
translated by Ralph Manheim
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux,
320 pp., $17.95, $9.95 paper)

The Voices of Marrakesh: A Record of a Visit
by Elias Canetti
translated by J. A. Underwood
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux,
104 pp., $6.95 paper)

It is hard to know what to make of him, in fact, so exotic are his visions, so eccentric is his vision. In 1981 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, but anyone coming upon *The Secret Heart of the Clock*, his most recent book in English, would have a difficult time imagining why. It is the sort of book that is meant to bring the reader closer to the writer—a collection of notes and aphorisms and fragments confided to notebooks between 1973 and 1985. They range from images that must have just come to mind ("the sieve of his self-confidence" is the entire text

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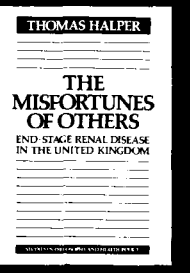

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of one) to hypothetical imaginings of lands and worlds in which our natural order is overturned and strange events become the rule ("a country where the language is changed every ten years," or "the land without brothers: no one has more than one child," or "a land where people burst with a little pop"). In these jottings, merely the evocation of these strangely premised universes is supposed to suffice for illumination.

Yet there are also more revealing hints of something more personal. "My melancholy is never free of anger," he writes. "Among writers I am one who rages." Or, "Only in fear am I completely myself." And in 1980, at the age of 75, "The very last thing in my life that still makes an impression on me: animals." Rage, fear, resentment, and misanthropic sentiments seem to accompany a sort of abstract "adoration of humanity." "One who reveres the worst—man—believes in its transformation," Canetti asserts; and we begin to wonder what this worst is, and what are the grounds for the adoration and the transformation that Canetti lays out in the writings of his career.

The life and the career are relatively uncomplicated, except for their restless movement. Canetti was born in 1905 in Ruschuk, Bulgaria, to a family of Sephardic Jewish merchants. He spoke Ladino, German, Bulgarian, and English before he was seven. (He was writing Latin poetry by the time he was 14.) His family moved to Manchester when he was eight, where his father died suddenly. Canetti's education was a sampling of Europe's best: schools in England, Vienna, and Zurich, including a doctorate in chemistry from the University of Vienna in 1929. Six years later, his novel, *Auto-da-Fé*, was published in German (as *Die Blendung*). By then he had set out on what he called his "life work," which took nearly three decades, and was published in English in 1962 as *Crowds and Power*. There were also plays, essays, the account of the visit to Marrakesh; and in 1977 Canetti began publishing his memoirs, three volumes of which have appeared in English so far.

But this life of adopted countries and languages and ambitions yielded sentiments that were anything but simple. As Susan Sontag has written, Canetti's life was "rich in displacements"; and so he cultivated a manner of displacement and detachment. He admired such 20th-century German writers as Musil and Kafka, and he seemed to imitate the allusive baroque quality of the first and the psychological paralysis of the second. But the youthful *Auto-da-Fé* also resists such comparisons. Canetti saw it as one of a series of books about modern types, about perverse figures who reacted to the world's horrors with obsessive peculiarity. He envisioned a Religious Fanatic, a Collector, an Actor, an Enemy of Death.

He got only as far as this novel, about a Book Man. Its main character, Kien, knows little about the world other than what is described by his scholarly texts. His universe is gradually taken over by a thuggish, illiterate cleaning woman with a starched skirt, who knows as little about her charge as he does about her. He is abused, imprisoned, and even tortured by her, all the while spinning absurd interpretations about the world created around him: a modern Don Quixote, beaten by the windmill. It is impossible to read this novel without horror, but no sympathy is permitted. Kien is actually something less than human, a bundle of bones and muscle whose delusions about the powers of language and learning have turned him into a pathetic organism who can live only in a cage bounded by his books; his final act is to set fire to his prized library, and to himself. The grotesques and brutes and cripples of this novel could hardly be imagined mourning at this pyre of Western civilization; they practically inspire its flames.

After years of rejections, the novel was published in 1935, sponsored by the philistine owner of a newspaper in Strasbourg who refused to read it. The patron thought, correctly, that he would have found it repellent; he sponsored it, incorrectly, because he imagined the book's horrors would serve as a cautionary warning against the dangers of our century. But Canetti does not exactly caution against the bleak universe of his novel. He is immersed in it, he is a believer in its apocalyptic tone, in its universal scorn; he calls its brutal account "graffiti on the walls of a new Pompei." "Kant Catches Fire" was Canetti's original title. Kant, who was devoted to the universal characteristics of thought, is destroyed: nothing is shared, everything said is misunderstood, there are no a prioris, no categorical imperatives.

Canetti may have viewed this sort of creaturely nihilism as the only authentic response to a crazed universe. But this recurrent (and by now tiresome) trope of our century haunts Canetti's other major book as well. *Crowds and Power* has the same insistence on a single theme that gives *Auto-da-Fé* its exhausting grip, though here the theme is unlimited by time or circumstance. All of human enterprise is seen as a manifestation of the drive to form crowds. The book ranges over the customs of primitive cultures, the metaphorical significance of rain and sand, the nature of tyranny. It is obsessed with the acts of primitive man—cannibalism, massacres, savagery—but it is clear that the obsession derives from the contemporary world: "It is not for a European of the 20th century to regard himself as above savagery." The formation of crowds becomes the primary fact of history; the imperial urge to increase one's numbers is the prime mover of peoples, the fundamental cause of battles, a biological need that is both an intoxication and a refuge. The book is as exhausting and distressing as the novel. With it, Canetti thought he was "grabbing this century by the throat."

Judging from some of the notebook entries in *The Secret Heart of the Clock*, Canetti is anxious, several decades later, to reinterpret his ideas, to give their peculiarity a better ground. That is one reason for his memoirs: "I ought to embed my ideas in their place of origin, to make them appear more natural. It is possible that by doing that, I would give them a different accent. I don't want to correct anything, but I want to retrieve the life that is part of the ideas, bring it in close and let it flow back into them." He wants to present what he calls "the tradition of a life," thus connecting the grand abstractions of *Crowds and Power* and the relentless obsessions of *Auto-da-Fé* with his own experience.

This attempt, it turns out, is extraordinarily revealing. Canetti would like to see himself as he sees that bundle—as a prideful, persistent, diligent presence, attempting to reach some discontented accommodation with the wayward world. He would also like to find some way of negotiating what he calls "the fluid boundary between individuals and types," between the ways in which concrete persons relate to the abstract and representative figures he so habitually imagines. The three volumes of memoirs published so far in English—*The Tongue Set Free*, *The Torch in My Ear*, and *The Play of the Eyes*—are accounts of the growth of the artist as a young man, learning to speak and hear and see. These tales, which barely bring the author to the age of 30, prepare the way for the production of his own more abstract cries in his novel, plays, criticism, and sociological analysis. They are an extraordinary literary achievement, more supple and suggestive than any of the works that gave Canetti the reputation he is recollecting.

The narratives of the earlier volumes are the most novelistic. They recall a youth speckled with relatives of gargantuan talent and elephantine pride,

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and a mother at once brilliant and hysterical, determining Canetti's displacements from country after country, drilling him in the German "mother" tongue in which he still writes. She reads him Strindberg nightly before he is in his teens, and promises him that she will never remarry; ridicules any hint of sentimentality that appears in her son, and leaves in him a dark, consuming hatred mixed with debt and worship.

But though the first volume is the most extraordinary in its shape and achievement, it is the third volume that is the most suggestive about Canetti's intellectual project. In *The Play of the Eyes*, Canetti begins to move within the marketplace of writers, artists, and ideas of the early 1930s in Vienna, finding in the midst of an age he has called "swift, menacing, and rich," the extreme, the exaggerated, the grotesque. Even if, at the time of many of these memories, *Auto-da-Fé* was still unpublished, and his plays—*The Wedding* and *Comedy of Vanities*—were still unstaged, Canetti was gaining a reputation for dramatic readings of these works at the homes of patrons, where, in the close-knit intellectual society of Vienna, he soon enough met the major literary figures of the time and the place. The performer recounts what he faced as he read: the great German novelist Hermann Broch flirting with Alma Mahler's beautiful daughter Anna instead of paying attention, Franz Werfel rudely interrupting his reading with scathing insults, James Joyce cryptically tossing a "wretched comment" at the expectant author. Canetti finds the universal rejection bracing, strengthening him for his life work: "It is defeats of such catastrophic proportions that keep a writer alive."

These memoirs are also an act of possession, a settling of old scores. There is, for example, a portrait of Heinrich Scherchen, the conductor who championed contemporary music during the early decades of the century. Canetti notes Scherchen's recurrent approach to building power: finding novelty, courting fashion, seducing key figures into his circle. He flatters Canetti with praise, then asks him conspiratorially to deliver a letter to Anna Mahler. But Canetti—strong-willed and strong-headed—soon becomes a rival for Anna's affections, and enmity with Scherchen follows. The very account becomes Canetti's delayed revenge. Canetti writes of the conductor: "At last I had before my eyes a perfect specimen of something I was determined to understand and portray: a dictator." Then he tells of the dictator at work. At a banquet Scherchen proclaims he will read everybody's palm. The 28-year-old author listens to the conductor's manipulative predictions for each of the guests; but a particularly cruel verdict is passed on Canetti's own hand. The 81-year-old memoirist writes, with a wry sense of vengeance against his nemesis: "I alone was doomed to die before my thirtieth birthday."

The memoirist seems to stalk through his own recollections, with a kind of animal determination, like a lion following its prey. Nearly everything is recounted with a primitive, simple clarity. And no slight is left unslighted. *The Play of the Eyes* seems to be about the play of power in the human animal. Every person in this memoir in some sense engages in a contest with the author, dominating him or being dominated by him. Canetti did indeed take an ax and attempt to murder his cousin for not showing him her notebooks. His literary assaults are more calculated, worked out with the care of a caricaturist, early self and late self in expert collusion.

The caricature comes in the exaggeration of a single feature of a person, the focus on a part of the physiognomy or personality. Thus Werfel, who slighted Canetti with both his literary judgment and his manners, becomes a rancid physical elaboration of his paunch. He "overflowed with sentiment, his fat belly gurgled with love and feeling, one expected to find little puddles on the floor around him and was almost disappointed to find it dry." The aging Alma Mahler is desiccated, grotesque, a mere appendage to the "trophies" of love and triumph she had collected about her and displayed to Canetti's horror. Hermann Broch is embodied in his "breath"—the respiration that Canetti finds in the man's posture and presence as well as in the movements of his prose and atmospheric style. The technique of caricature is present even in the titles of each volume of these memoirs that name parts of the sensing body. It is, I think, the way Canetti sees: individuals turn into representatives of types, their particularities becoming, as in the shrieking bundle or the churning crowd, exhausted by a single peculiarity.

The eyes of this third volume are themselves caricatures, revealing, commanding, demanding. They belong first to Anna, Alma Mahler's daughter with whom Canetti falls in love only to be suddenly and unpredictably cut off. Anna's "play of the eyes" is dangerous, seductive and enchanting; her eyes fix him, glittering, like a deep lake or pool. So powerful are they that her blunt and sudden rejection of Canetti has something "sublime" about it, as if such behavior were the natural right of a beautiful animal. "A woman endowed with such eyes," Canetti is told at one point by a friend, "couldn't help herself, she was a slave to the needs of her eyes, not as victim but as huntress."

The play of the eyes is also something that is far from private. It is a visible play that is meant to get the response of another. It is the play of the public life, the play of reputation and interaction and power. When Canetti is in the midst of a reading and sees Broch and Anna engaged in the "play of the eyes," or when he himself stares down Werfel and his "jutting right eye" at a concert, these are life and death games being played with these agents of power.

So potent are they that blindness becomes at once a great fear and a great relief. In *Auto-da-Fé* Kien feigns blindness to escape the power of his starched-skirted temptress and keeper Therese. And the original German title of the novel—*The Blinding*—is one that suggests Kien's escape, his punishment, and his revenge, all at once, in a world in which sight is delusion. The blinding in *The Play of the Eyes* occurs figuratively, with the death of Canetti's mother, with whom he struggled so bitterly in earlier volumes. "She lay there, emaciated," Canetti

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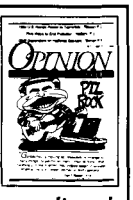

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writes, "reduced to pale skin, with deep black holes instead of eyes." But it is also clear, during the ineffably moving pages of this recollection, that the author himself cannot escape the vision of his mother's eyes: "Her breathing grew weaker, but the power of her eyes grew stronger." They are the eyes that taught him about power. In their power to seduce, to intoxicate, to capture, to expand, they display an individualized version of the power of crowds: they are the crowd-organs of the human face.

Canetti's "tradition of a life" soon enough connects with the ideas of his work. The memoirs display the workings of power in the individual. *Crowds and Power*, a book more often praised than read, explores it in large groups. It is easy to imagine such a preoccupation developing on the eve of the Second World War, which was to have, as Canetti writes in *The Play of the Eyes*, the "proud and gluttonous appetite of a biblical Assyrian war." Clearly the crowds of Hitler are the ones that haunt Canetti's excavations into the primitive past.

Canetti was not, of course, alone in his choice of subject. Freud's ghost hovers over this text, his study of group psychology gnawed to pieces without ever being mentioned; and the study of massification was the preoccupation also of Ortega y Gasset and the Frankfurt School. But Canetti's approach was eclectic, stubbornly idiosyncratic. He expends his most brilliant energies establishing a sort of typological catalog of crowds: closed crowds and open crowds, slow crowds and fast crowds, feast crowds and flight crowds. There are crowds that have a quickly attainable goal, crowds created by a threat, crowds created in a closed space. But the primary urge of all crowds is to expand, to dissolve the individual in its mass. "The crowd always wants to grow."

Each type of crowd goes about its project in a different way, generating phenomena ranging from religious movements (a slow-moving crowd, closed to the uninitiated, heading toward its ever distant goal) to war (involving double and opposing crowds dependent on each other for their goals and existence). Under Canetti's gaze, the crowd becomes an organism, a beast that crouches under the phenomena of world history. The result is a sort of mystical primitivism. Everything has its roots not only in a primal crowd instinct, but in the life of primitive man. The voices and the passions of primitive man come to be the dominant voices and passions of all culture's life.

Unlike, say, Max Weber, who catalogued types of religious and social behavior with a complicated understanding of, and respect for, rational life and the material world, Canetti's universe is strangely shrunken, like some cannibal's trophy head. The primitive becomes the measure of all phenomena; and our heritage in animal life becomes the explanation of all power and evil. Canetti weaves haunting images, but he means them to be explanations. The eating and the chewing of food become the model for power's workings, the grid of man's teeth the model for the prison, and so on. Even the diagnoses of modern psychology are "explained" as if they were episodes in the life of a hunter-gatherer: "hysteria" is described as a preparation for flight, "mania" as a desire to capture one's prey. Crowds, he writes, are so much more nakedly visible today because they are freed from the bounds of traditional religion and displayed in their "biological state." It is a state of unquenchable appetite and insurmountable waste. "How should there be value," Canetti asks, "in a life that resembles an intestinal tract?"

It is no wonder that Canetti has had so little influence with his theories, or that *Crowds and Power* loses its impact (and its organization) after its themes are stated. There is no place to take them. Canetti's findings are more evocative than instructive: one isn't clear by the end how totalitarianism developed, or how crowd instincts can be modified, or how civilization develops, or why positing an instinct for crowds is any more revealing than positing (with Freud) an instinct for death. By the time Canetti concludes his book with a discussion of the paranoid personality of Schreber (a case made famous by Freud), the implied equivalence between Schreber and Hitler is banal and unrevealing.

For all its acknowledgment of the ugly sides of human life, Canetti's analysis is oddly naive. The impulse for crowds is so universal that it is trivial. Canetti even finds the powers of the crowd in swarms of microscopic spermatozoa: "200 million of these animalcules set out together on their way," he solemnly proclaims. "They all have the same goal and, except for one, they all perish on the way." And when Canetti does turn practical in his analysis—as in his survey of the political scene at the end of the 1950s—he again reduces historical complexities to typology. He comments, for example, that the "modern frenzy for increase" in economic production is eliminating the old notion of war between double crowds. As a result, he suggests, sport can replace war as a "crowd phenomenon" on a "world-wide scale." But until the Olympics pacify man's animal nature, social life becomes almost completely a matter of nature's law. Canetti is a primitive determinist.

But the memoirs also show another side, a sort of aesthetic faith that is as pervasive as nature's evil workings, and is peculiarly unmoving. That faith is in the role of the writer as a fighter against power. In Canetti's vision, power detests the possibilities of imagination, for power "is sufficient unto itself and wills only itself." Imagination's ability to create other worlds, other situations, other beings, is a freedom that is a threat. Canetti calls this writerly power "transformation" or "metamorphosis"—against which "a ruler wages continuous warfare." The writer's calling is to be "the keeper of metamorphosis," who can undo, through voice and word, the grip of power and the crowd by first eluding it, and then transforming it. "Of all man's gifts transformation is the best . . . after all the crimes he has committed it is

Scarlet Lake

Derain, after his wife's
suicide, awoke in the Alps
in a small hotel.
The grass was crazy with bees—
and how the fish
were jumping on the lake!
He gazed over it for hours,
smoking his blunt meerschaum
with the amber stem.
A spider plant hung its
satellites around his head.
Embers hissed in the stove.
In the eggshell demitasse
the coffee grounds swirled
like ocean sediment,
glinting with lights.
He watched the fat cook
amble up through the pines
clutching a pair
of ducks the porter
had ambushed at dawn.
Their bright green feathers
were streaked with mud.
Blood speckled their bills.
When a storm swept in from
the west—from France—
the rain slanting down
hard across the mountains,
only the surface of the lake
remained undisturbed,
placid; very slowly
it turned a deep red.

Nicholas Christopher

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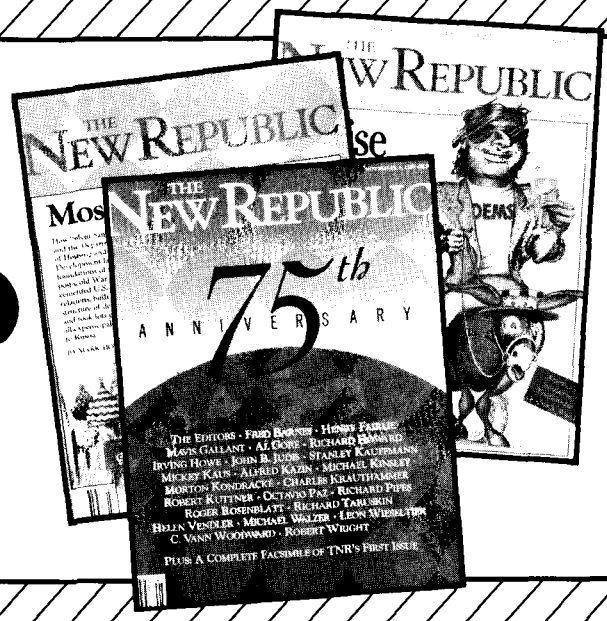

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his justification and crowning glory."

This displays a rather Romantic faith in the power of the imagination. Indeed, there are indications that Canetti attaches a magical power to transformation itself; it is in some sense redemptive, an alternative to a Nature (and a Society) red in tooth and claw. He sees metamorphosis as a literal transformation of a world, a force that has nearly physical impact. The eyes play with power, but redemption comes with the setting free of the tongue, the writer's tool.

This theme is never argued, it is only asserted with the calmness of unquestioned faith. It is also why at the heart of *The Play of the Eyes*, with its tales of domination and submission, there is also a dissenting quest, a search for a truly good man who neither courts power nor submits to it, an articulate version of that helpless bundle in Marrakesh. Here Canetti's idealism reaches full bloom. He claims to find such a man in a person named Dr. Sonne. Sonne looks like Karl Kraus, the Viennese writer to whom Canetti was almost religiously devoted for a time. But unlike Kraus, his tool is not satire or citation or scorn, but a refined, kind intellect. The effusive Canetti tells us nothing about the man's life or his past; there are no details, not even Sonne's true name. He simply asserts that Sonne possessed encyclopedic knowledge and wisdom. It is enough that Canetti calls him the "angel Gabriel," a "supreme authority" whose name—the Sun—is the "source and . . . end of all life."

But if Canetti tells us nothing about him, it is because ideal goodness for Canetti is a sort of nothingness, an abstention from all power play, even from the attempt to survive. When Canetti discovers that Sonne actually once wrote some Hebrew poetry, it is a mark against him. Only in non-activity, in withdrawal, could Sonne, the writer who doesn't write, attain sainthood. Canetti intimately understands Kafka and his urge for withdrawal from the world; Sonne is Canetti's Samsa. The writer is at his best when he has practiced metamorphosis, and turned himself into an insect or cripple, like the paralyzed philosopher in *The Torch in the Ear* who can only read his books by using his tongue to turn the pages. The cripple, the isolate, the solitary dreamer: there is Canetti's answer to a life he compares to passage through an intestinal tract. Would that wailing bundle in Marrakesh ever sully itself with power?

This leaves Canetti with very few choices. For, as these memoirs show again and again, the very act of living involves an incessant play with power. What is the writer to do, then, in his withdrawal from the world? The only choice is to reject life as it really is, ordinary life, with all its struggles and its preoccupations, to say no to it, again and again. This rejection can mean arguing that life is indeed little more than an intestinal tract, a realm of biological waste and stifled impulse, treating the figures who move through it as caricatures, as exaggerated and distorted versions of what was once called "human." This Canetti often does, mixing his disdain with a cold propriety. One does not read Canetti for his empathy for the inner life of others; he is too preoccupied with caricature and type, too busy schematically outlining the person's relationship to himself and to the "play of the eyes." One of his books, *Earwitness*, is nothing more than a collection of 50 caricatures.

But the rejection of life can also mean idealizing humanity in the abstract while despairing of it in the particular, disdaining all that is specific for the sake of something indefinite and ideal. This is Canetti's other impulse. Educated as a Sephardic Jew, he declares, for example, that though he was an avid learner of languages, a collector of myths, a student of ancient religions, he deliberately avoided getting acquainted with the Hebrew Bible. "It would have narrowed me down to learn more about things that were so close to my origins, though I had preserved a keen interest in every other religion."

So Canetti declares himself a sort of universalist. He must keep the world out of focus long enough to escape his own will to power. Compassion exists only globally and generally: "I care about the life of every human being," he boasts in *The Torch in My Ear*, "and not just that of my neighbor." But he loves the idea of man too much not to despise the particular. There is an oddly inhuman quality to Canetti's humanism. His compassion even extends to the inanimate. He speaks of the great pity he has for drops of water: they are irrevocably separated from the ocean, their home.

According to such a view of life, living itself is a sign of something like sin, not Original but Intrinsic. The very act of living is a sign that one has succumbed to temptation. "Survival," Canetti has said, "is at the core of everything that we . . . call power." For Canetti, the survivor survives because he stands over other corpses. Canetti's survivor is not the figure that any student of World War II, of Canetti's war, might imagine: a man or woman who managed, by chance or character or strength or faith, to avoid being plowed under by murderous machinery let loose. He is, rather, the manager of such machinery, his survival a sign of complicity. "Few readers," Canetti writes, "can have finished the chapters on the survivor without some feeling of disgust. But it was my intention to hunt him out in all his hiding-places and show him for what he is and always has been. He has been glorified as a hero and obeyed as a ruler, but fundamentally he is always the same. . . . The survivor is mankind's worst evil, its curse and perhaps its doom." The survivor commands, he rules, he kills.

Here Canetti's humanism becomes really frightening, his primitivism, his idealism, his disgust at the particular seem to echo precisely the sentiments of his enemies during the last war. His description is, again, caricature. Is survival simply the key fact? Are there not different kinds of survivors? Are all who survived the war really guilty? Was there no value in resistance? Would their death have been philosophically preferable? And what happened to Canetti's own Bulgarian family during the war? Such distinctions would distract Canetti from his attempts at caricature and condemnation.

And if survival itself becomes a curse, what is left? "Hitherto the only answer to man's passionate desire for survival has been a creative solitude which earns immortality for itself; and this, by definition, can be the solution only for a few." This is his own alibi: immortality through writing and withdrawal. But this is hardly a solution to the problems Canetti has constructed for himself. The memoirs prove it. They are written in the fray, uneasy and unforgiving. Indeed, in *The Secret Heart of the Clock*, Canetti begins to recognize that he is the survivor he has so forthrightly condemned. He notes "the *guilt* of surviving, which you have always felt." It is the guilt of life and particularity, the guilt that suffuses his memoirs and gives them their crisp brilliance. Expunging that guilt is nothing less than suicide. "It would be beautiful to disappear," Canetti says in another aphorism, "nowhere to be found." There should be no mark left, not even of absence: "It would be beautiful to be the only one to know that you have disappeared."

So Canetti's writings are torn by paradox. His own recollections are tales of domination and submission, of power and play. And yet he dreams again and again of escape, of disappearance, of the elimination of all particularity, of absorption into universality, of an oblivion that grants him a peculiar immortality. But is not this dream of dissolution also a yearning for a crowd? A crowd of words, not a crowd of men; but still Canetti

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wishes to submerge himself.

"Why should it be important what you thought?" Canetti asks himself in *The Secret Heart of the Clock*. It is a rare moment in Canetti's work, when the author is not a guilty survivor, a universal visionary, a grand theoretician, a seeker of revenge, when he is, simply, a man. "Since you have not achieved anything, anything at all, it can just as well disappear." This is an uncharacteristic retreat, the writer submitting to death because he believes, at least for a moment, that his work will not survive. The despair passes quickly, but there is another entry, more provocative and more revelatory, in the journals for 1985, the year in which Canetti turned 80:

> The whole enormous apparatus you have erected serves no purpose. It doesn't save anyone. It gives a false appearance of strength, no more than a boast, and is from beginning to end as helpless as any other scheme.
>
> The truth is that you have not yet found out what would be the right and valid and humanly useful attitude. You haven't gone beyond saying no.

Too Late the Liberal

BY J. M. COETZEE

Save the Beloved Country by Alan Paton

(Scribner's, 336 pp., $22.50)

Alan Paton is best known as the author of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, a book that has probably opened the eyes of more readers to the woes of South Africa than any other. *Cry, the Beloved Country* was not only Paton's first novel, but his first book. It appeared in 1948, when he was already in his middle years. It became a best seller and brought him financial independence and fame. But in retrospect that fame now seems a mixed blessing. An obscure public servant, Paton was turned, not wholly unwillingly, into a sage and oracle, the guide for editors and interviewers in search of wisdom on South Africa. It was a role in which he remained trapped for much of the rest of his life. The effects can be seen not only in the increasingly ex cathedra tone of his pronouncements, and in his tendency to think, speak, and write in brief, easy-to-chew paragraphs, but in his failure to break new ground and to develop as a writer.

Paton was born in 1903 in the province of Natal, the only province of South Africa in which people of British descent form the majority of the white population. After a decade as a high school teacher, he took over the principalship of Diepkloof Reformatory for African juvenile delinquents, where he enjoyed a remarkable career as a reformer. He transformed what had been a prison into a school, doing away with forced labor and introducing vocational education, relaxing surveillance, abolishing corporal punishment, and delegating day-to-day administration to the boys themselves. When Paton took leave from Diepkloof in 1946, it was with the intention of studying penology abroad before returning to a career in the prison service. But in Sweden something unplanned happened. Under the influence of what he later called "a powerful emotion," he began to write a story based on his Diepkloof experiences. Three months later *Cry, the Beloved Country* was completed.

In the remaining 40 years of his life, Paton wrote a great deal: two more novels (*Too Late the Phalarope*, in 1953, and *Ah but your Land is Beautiful*, in 1981, the second an embarrassingly poor piece of work), stories, memoirs, biographies, a two-volume autobiography, and a sizable body of journalism. But he remained a one-book man. His other fiction, in particular, is vitiated by a sentimentality that *Cry, the Beloved Country* escapes only by the sheer power of its sentiment. Like Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*, it gives the impression of having been written at the dictation of an overmastering daimon. In both cases the writers spent the rest of their lives fruitlessly trying to recover that first fine rapture.

Not all readers of *Cry, the Beloved Country* may remember where the strange title comes from. Here is the relevant passage: "Cry, the beloved country, for the unborn child that is the inheritor of our fear. Let him not love the earth too deeply. . . . For fear will rob him of all if he gives too much." Though the novel overtly takes up a confident liberal stance, calling for greater idealism and commitment to Christian and democratic values, the experience it deals with beneath the surface is, as Paton's best critic, Tony Morphet, has argued, more troubling. The "powerful emotion" out of which the novel emerged was fear for himself and his humanity, fear for the future of South Africa and her people. Fear was the emotion that had held Paton in its grip in those hotel rooms in Sweden and England and the United States where he wrote the book; and the book, with its anxious ending, cannot be said to have settled his fear.

Back in South Africa, Paton did not confine himself to writing. His most practical and most immediately effective act was to found, in 1953, the Liberal Party, a non-racial political party that survived, in the face of continual official harassment, for 13 years, until it was legislated out of existence. Though he was a deeply committed Christian, Paton confesses that the "deepest fellowship of [his] life" was felt not in the Church but in the Liberal Party.

Liberalism, to him, was not only a political philosophy, but a creed embracing "a generosity of spirit, a tolerance of others, an attempt to comprehend otherness, a commitment to the rule of law, a high ideal of the worth and dignity of man, a repugnance for authoritarianism, and a love of freedom." In view of the forces of intolerant sectarianism, racism, and nationalism that it faced, this was, as Morphet rightly names it, "a politics of innocence." Though it never commanded the allegiance of more than a small minority of the white electorate, it did keep alive a certain spark of non-racial idealism as the fortress of apartheid began to be erected on all sides.

After the forced dissolution of the Liberal Party, Paton became a more lonely figure on the South African scene. He shared the common and perhaps blessed inability of liberals to sympathize with, or indeed even to understand, how deep sectional passions can run. He had always feared and disliked Afrikaner nationalism, and one senses in him scant welcome for the rising tide of black nationalism. He continued to hope, with less and less conviction, that fellow citizens of British descent would emerge from their slumber and exert themselves on behalf of such old-fashioned British values as respect for the rule of law (something, by and large, they have never done).

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He was little attracted by the prospect of a unitary, centrally administered state such as the African National Congress promised, to be brought into being by revolution if necessary. Though he recognized that a unitary state would be "right and inevitable" if that was what the majority of South Africans wanted, and though a unitary state had in fact been part of the platform of the Liberal Party, it seemed to him that the price to pay for it would always be too high: "grief and desolation" on a huge scale. He therefore pleaded the case for a federal constitution based on universal suffrage, with effective power devolved to regions and communities. He pinned his hopes for the future on the enigmatic Zulu leader Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, whom he called "one of the most powerful figures on [our] political stage, fluent, extremely knowledgeable, impossible to buy," and on the kind of accommodation with whites that Buthelezi seemed to stand for.

On the question of action by the West against apartheid, Paton took a cautious position. In 1979 he had an interview with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in which he counseled Vance to exert pressure on the South African government, but to do so "with the greatest skill and wisdom," lest the South Africans, concluding that by cooperating they had everything to lose and nothing to gain, went their own way, taking the country to destruction with them. But he was utterly opposed to economic sanctions. "I hereby solemnly declare," he wrote, "that I will never, by any act or word of mine, give any support to any campaign that will put men out of jobs": no goal could be grand enough to justify turning South Africa into "a starving nation." To destroy the South African economy, he argued, would anyhow be an invitation to the U.S.S.R. to intervene. On the other hand, Paton did call in 1985 for "the greatest moral and pragmatic pressure" to be brought to bear on the South African regime in the interests of its "re-education."

On the issue of sanctions, Paton had more than one exchange with Archbishop Desmond Tutu. "I don't understand how your Christian conscience allows you to advocate disinvestment," he wrote in an open letter. "I do not understand how you can put a man out of work for a high moral principle." In the same letter he congratulated Tutu on winning the Nobel Peace Prize, and added: "I have never won a prize like that. I am afraid my skin is not the right color." The comment is petty, and does not reflect well on Paton. Perhaps it is understandable: little honored in his own country, Paton was jealous of his own standing in the outside world and unhappy that the invitations and honors stopped flowing in during his later years.

Though it may seem from his statements that Paton moved to the right as he grew older, it would be more accurate to say that he stood still while the entire South African opposition, both black and white, to which he had once been central, moved left. His politics, in which a Christian commitment to nonviolence coexisted, not entirely easily, with an implacable detestation of apartheid and a hawkish anticommunism, never really changed. In the 1950s Paton had been denounced as a liberal from the right; in the 1980s the left freely used "liberal," as well as "humanist," as terms of abuse. Through it all he remained a liberal, and proud of it. Though liberalism had held the allegiance of many good people, they had never been enough, never nearly enough. As a political force liberalism had missed the boat, he knew. But in the creed itself there was nothing dishonorable. If blacks sneered at liberals, he said, it was not because liberals had ever been hypocritical or cowardly, but because they had proved themselves powerless.

Still, Paton was plainly shocked by the scale of violence in the black townships in 1985-86. His rather wistfully expressed hope, against hope, that a booming economy and a gradual mellowing of the Afrikaner would allow a black middle class to come into being and make revolution unnecessary was shattered; he called 1985 "the unhappiest year of my life." All around him he saw attitudes hardening. P. W. Botha, whom he had at one time considered an improvement over his predecessors and with whom he had exchanged what he calls "firm but courteous letters," veered between dictatorial rages and dogged inaction. Afrikaner nationalism, once "an arrogant and relentless juggernaut," he wrote, had now become "a shambling giant who doesn't know where he is going."

Here and there in *Save the Beloved Country* there are equally pithy and perceptive observations. Of the "half-emancipated" Afrikaner of the 1980s Paton writes: "He wants to be more just, but he wants to remain the boss. It just cannot be done." On the black leaders Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, Z. K. Matthews, Albert Luthuli: "One cannot say that the [ruling] National Party destroyed their lives, because, in fact, it made them immortal." On the death of Steve Biko: it was not so much the brutality of the police that was disturbing, but the nonchalance with which the government treated a historic calamity. "The death of Mr. Biko . . . will be remembered when . . . the Anglo-Boer War has been forgotten."

But all in all *Save the Beloved Country* is a thin and disappointing book. It is made up, for the most part, of short pieces originally written for newspapers, which are reproduced verbatim. Many of these pieces are about wholly ephemeral political infighting. These Lilliputian and eminently forgettable squabbles are laboriously footnoted. Where Paton uses Afrikaans, it is left standing in the text and translated in the footnotes. The translations are often stilted and sometimes misleading. Whoever planned this book (no editor is named) would have been better advised to cut out the dross—but then we might have been left with a very lean book indeed. The short medium to which Paton confines himself (few of the pieces are more than five pages long, some only a few hundred words) does not allow him to develop ideas. In one piece—a speech—Paton mentions some of the topics he would have liked to expand on had he had the time; they include the consequences of exile for men and women, and the effects on the South African security police of their work and "the evil to which they . . . must give consent." Interesting and substantial questions, points of intersection of the human and the political: one would have welcomed the insights of Paton the novelist.

One would have welcomed, too, his insights into Hendrik Verwoerd. Verwoerd was prime minister of South Africa in the 1960s, architect in chief of the laws of apartheid, a Nazi sympathizer; he cherished a particular animosity for Paton, and was personally responsible for undoing all Paton's work at Diepkloof Reformatory. If there is such a thing as an evil man, there is a case to be made that Verwoerd was one. He certainly brought a great deal of misery and suffering into the world.

What does Paton think? The question to which Paton directs himself is, surprisingly, not whether Verwoerd was an evil man, but whether he was a great man. His conclusion is that Verwoerd was not great, that "it was the very fervor of his loyalty to a narrow creed that prevented him from attaining greatness." This rather baffling way of conceiving of Verwoerd and his deeds provides a clue to Paton's strength as well as his weakness as a judge of men. His weakness is, I think, a certain lack of curiosity about

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people in themselves. His strength is that he does not rush to judgment. He believed in what he believed in, but with less than fanatic singleness of conviction. There were always, to Paton, two sides to a question. If Paton was not a great man, he was at least greater than Verwoerd in his less-than-fervid loyalty to a broader and more human creed.

As for the writing itself, one soon tires of Paton's Churchillian mannerisms. ("There are those who ask, what good has [protest] done? It has done a lot of good. It enables us to say, South Africa is a land of fear, but it is a land of courage also.") As a novelist, Paton had no particular gift for narrative. His novels are statically constructed, depending for their effect on character and emotion and (in the case of *Cry, the Beloved Country*) the intensity of the driving passion. Here there is no narrative, none of the novelist's art, and the book is the worse for it. Perhaps the best piece is a report on a trip that Paton made in 1978 to a small country town to attend the funeral of Robert Sobukwe, founder of the Pan-Africanist Congress. This piece draws its strength not only from the strong emotions of grief and outrage that it evokes, but from being cast as a story. There are certain authors whose every scrap of writing, no matter how occasional, it is important to save; but I am not sure that Paton is one of them.

In his foreword, Paton observes that in the 20 years covered by *Save the Beloved Country* (1967-87) he had written about little but South Africa, and asks himself whether this will make the book "boring and monotonous." The answer he gives his own question is, no, South Africa is not just another country, it is a theater for an age-old struggle between good and evil, a microcosm of the world. But the right answer to the question is, sadly, yes. The book *is* boring and monotonous: not because it is limited to South Africa, but because of the quality of Paton's writing and of his thinking. The names of many significant actors on the South African stage crop up, but Paton has little that is new or penetrating to say about them. One comes to suspect that in the course of the years he lost interest in other people: in what they were in themselves, in what they thought. As in his novels, in which characters are ethical beings rather than psychological beings, there is a certain blankness about what makes people tick. Neither his friends nor his foes are brought to life by his words.

J. M. COETZEE is the author most recently of *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (Yale University Press).

The Metamorphosis

BY ROBERT ALTER

The Storyteller by Mario Vargas Llosa translated by Helen Lane

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 246 pp., $17.95)

This intriguing work of fiction is less a novel than an illustrated meditation, with an anecdotal frame, on the nature of culture and the relation of narrative to culture. The unnamed first-person narrator is a thinly fictionalized stand-in for Mario Vargas Llosa. He is the same age; has the same educational background; produces a television program, as in fact Vargas Llosa did, called "The Tower of Babel" (a kind of Peruvian "60 Minutes"); and writes his story in a sultry season in Florence, where Vargas Llosa actually began *The Storyteller* in the summer of 1985. The only character besides the narrator with more than a walk-on role is Saúl Zuratas, the narrator's Jewish friend from his university years in Lima, but Zuratas is more an idea or an obsession than a realized novelistic character.

The two men have not seen each other for almost 30 years. Teasing hints and clues—an ambiguously shaded face in a photograph of Amazonian natives, ripples of rumor emanating from the Amazon—lead the narrator to conclude that his old friend has sloughed off both his Peruvian and his Jewish identity, plunged into the primal world of the great rain forest, and surfaced in the Machiguenga tribe as a traditional *hablador*, a spellbinding speaker and storyteller. This central fact of the plot, as the narrator himself recognizes, is a little improbable, and Vargas Llosa tries, somewhat surprisingly, to build a bridge from Lima to the jungle, from the 20th century to the stone age, through Saúl Zuratas's Jewishness.

The correspondences between Jew and Machiguengan are intimated early on, and then spelled out (perhaps too explicitly) late in the book when Zuratas as storyteller recounts in Machiguengan terms the history of the Jews. Both peoples are uprooted, banished by invading foreigners with superior technology; both become wanderers (the Machiguengas call themselves "the men who walk"); both stubbornly cling to their language, their traditions, their intricate tapestry of taboos, through all of which they constantly affirm, against the threat of seeming chaos, "the order that reigns in the world."

The addiction to storytelling as the vehicle of vital wisdom that is sometimes transparent, sometimes baffling, is represented as another essential link between Machiguengan and Jew. In his pre-Amazonian years, Zuratas, an assimilated Jew, makes visible contact with just one serious expression of Jewish culture: the fiction of Kafka. The story that particularly fascinates him is "The Metamorphosis," no doubt because he himself, like the protagonist Gregor Samsa, is a pariah figure, half his face frighteningly disfigured by a strawberry-blotch birthmark.

The stories Zuratas tells his Machiguengan audiences—conveyed in long chapters intercalated in the narrator's reflective account of his own pursuit of the traces of his vanished friend—evoke a magical world in which weird transformations from man to animal are everyday occurrences. When, near the end of the book, Zuratas retells to his Amazonian listeners the story of Samsa's metamorphosis into a "buzz buzz bug," this tale invented by a Prague Jew seems absolutely at one with their experience of a radically unstable reality, inhabited by quirky and dangerous spirits, exposed to mercurial changes in forms of being, yet somehow held in check by the shaping power of narrative.

By a technical tour de force, Vargas Llosa makes us see an affinity between Kafka and native storyteller, between Jew and Machiguengan, but it must also be said that the set of correspondences he proposes sometimes seems more like Dr. Johnson's definition of the metaphysical conceit: "a violent yoking of heterogenous elements." The Jews and the Machiguengas may both be tradition-haunted people, but the Jews have also been, after all, a people cut off from nature; cerebral; caught up in the exegetical intricacies of a culture conspicuously tied to the written word; and in the view of some of their vigorous

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internal critics in the modern era, not primitive enough by half. Or, on the contrary, if one chooses to adopt the more celebratory self-evaluation of Freud in *Moses and Monotheism*, the Jews are, above all, the people who renounced instinctual gratification for the sake of intellectual labor—which is rather unlike the route of Amazonian tribal culture.

The Storyteller speaks with the voice of the late 20th century, not merely in its ecological concern for the destruction of the rain forest, but more centrally in its vision of the precious particularism of human cultures. In this respect, the novel can be read as a pointed reversal of *Heart of Darkness*. It is conceivable that Vargas Llosa is deliberately alluding to Conrad. Both books are written out of a guilty consciousness of the effects of colonialism, but to opposite effects. In *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz, the Westerner who goes native, discovers behind his own thin facade of civilization-bearer a deep affinity with the demonic that is manifested in the savage rites of the Congolese. Beneath surface distinctions between black and white, African and European, lies a universal human potential for depravity ("The horror! The horror!") that at best can be camouflaged by a veil of lies, as Marlow the narrator does for the sake of Kurtz's fiancée.

By contrast, what Vargas Llosa's lapsed Westerner discovers on the banks of the Amazon is not the universal darkness of human nature, man's vocation for chaos, but instead one of the many primal languages of human culture, untainted by high technology, mass society, and secularization. The Machiguengas reveal to Zuratas the possibility of a primeval integrity, rooted in a nurturing sense of tradition, of community, of transmissible wisdom, and, above all, of a pervasive correspondence between the "spirit of man and the spirits of Nature."

The obvious danger of this whole conception of the Amazonians is that it could easily decline into a latter-day version of the Noble Savage, a trap of sentimentalization that at one point the narrator explicitly says he wants to avoid. Vargas Llosa cannot entirely escape this trap because the basic premise of his plot is, after all, the pristine wholeness of primitive culture, but he can at least mitigate the sentimentality in the way he realizes the Amazonian world. The persuasiveness, then, of the book as a whole hangs on Vargas Llosa's ability to meet the daunting technical challenge of the Zuratas chapters, which as he himself put it, "was the difficulty of inventing, in Spanish and within a logically consistent intellectual framework, a literary form that would suggest, with any reasonable degree of credibility, how a primitive man with a magico-religious mentality would go about telling a story."

Style has its own moral imperatives, and I think Vargas Llosa avoids blatantly sentimentalizing his savages by creating a style for his storyteller that is at once rough-hewn and crafted, without adjectival insistence or syntactic complications, focused on the gritty concreteness of the physical world and attuned to its animistic presences. (His stylistic success is beautifully conveyed in Helen Lane's English version.) At one point the storyteller explains how he taps an ultimate source for his tales by "listening, carefully, respectfully," to the rain forest through which he walks:

> The things you'd least expect speak. There they are: speaking. Bones, thorns. Pebbles, lianas. Little bushes and budding leaves. The scorpion. The line of ants dragging a botfly back to the anthill. The butterfly with rainbow wings. The hummingbird. The mouse up a branch speaks, and circles in the water. . . . The little stone you can hardly see, it's so small, sticking out of the mud. Even the louse you crack in two with your fingernail has a story to tell. If I could only remember everything I've been hearing. You'd never tire of me, perhaps.

As conventional syntactic ordering is displayed by this chain of noun clauses and brief simple sentences, the sheer presence of natural things obtrudes, as it might in a consciousness different from a modern man's. Both the language—shorn as it is of evaluative and descriptive elaboration—and the things described break the frame of the aesthetic and attitudinal hierarchies in which we are accustomed to imagine the world: bones, thorns, botfly, butterfly, hummingbird, mouse, louse, and stone are set at one level as things that speak to the storyteller. Nature is a realm of odd and often raucous presences, quite unlike, say, the gently semantic universe, suffused with hidden light, of Wordsworth's poetry. And if the lyric catalog is vaguely reminiscent of Modernist poetry, that is a happy congruence, which in part may reflect the fascination with the primitive in early 20th-century literature.

The Machiguengan world revealed in Zuratas's stories is not "noble" but earthy, naive in some ways and shrewd in others, crude, sometimes cruel, scary and funny, and always buoyed up by an unmodern sense of the culture-sustaining efficacy of telling the tale. Here, for example, is the *hablador* in a mood of fantastic humor, recounting how Tasurinchi, the creator-god and culture-hero (who is sometimes blurred with the storyteller), suffers a wasp sting on his penis, which then swells to epic proportions:

> The birds perched on it to sing, thinking it was a tree. When Tasurinchi urinated, a cataract of warm water, foamy as the rapids of the Gran Pongo, came out of its big mouth. Tasurinchi could have bathed in it, and his family too, maybe. He used it as a seat when he stopped to rest. And at night it was his pallet.

The Zuratas chapters of *The Storyteller* are arresting because Vargas Llosa has found in them a style that vividly manifests the otherness of primitive culture at the same time that it intimates certain abiding connections with our own culture; this accounts for the force of the retelling of Kafka's "Metamorphosis," with no real violation of the German story, in Amazonian idiom. It may be something of an anthropological cliché to say that without stories there is no human culture, but Vargas Llosa makes the meaning of the notion vividly concrete by showing through Zuratas's tales how the act of narrative invention gives us a human handle on birth, sex, and death; sky, earth, and water; pain and healing; animal, vegetable, and human—everything that inspires perplexity and wonder and threatens to defy human control.

Vargas Llosa's book is poorer, however, for its patently exemplary character. The outsider who joins the outsider people in order to take up one of the primary tasks of civilization from time immemorial is meant to be an example to all of us moderns, marooned in a wasteland created by technology, mindless individualism, and rampant secularization. The narrator, constantly ruminating on the bizarre destiny of his friend Saúl, has a propensity to spell out meanings that might better have been left implicit. I would have preferred the book to end not with the narrator, who provides a series of reflections on the Machiguengan sense of history (it is not a forward march but goes round and round), the importance of their myths, and the reasons for Zuratas's going native, but rather with the last note of the immediately preceding Zuratas chapter: the storyteller in the jungle, a pet parrot perched on his head, cawing out the name that people called its master in his now forgotten life in Lima—Mascarita, the Masked One.

ROBERT ALTER's most recent book is *The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age* (Simon and Schuster).

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Felix's Friends

BY JEFFERSON MORLEY

Shadow Warrior: The CIA Hero of a Hundred Untold Battles by Felix I. Rodriguez and John Weisman

(Simon and Schuster, 283 pp., $19.95)

Shadow Warrior is the life story of Felix Rodriguez, an operative from the Central Intelligence Agency, who played a secondary but important role in the Iran-*contra* affair. Between 1985 and 1987 Rodriguez, under the pseudonym of "Max Gomez," ran the San Salvador depot of President Reagan's illegal network to aid the *contra* rebels fighting in Nicaragua. This assignment added to Rodriguez's already extensive résumé of covert activities. He infiltrated Cuba before the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. He helped capture Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1967. In the late 1970s he worked for Edwin Wilson, the former top-ranking CIA official who now resides in federal prison.

Shadow Warrior is, then, a glimpse behind the curtains of national security policy. As a memoir, the book celebrates Rodriguez's career as a spook with the kind of inside anecdotes that glamorize the profession. (So that's how a CIA agent lives in Ecuador . . .) But the book must, if its author is a professional, also conceal at least some of his actions, in order to protect CIA sources and methods, to forestall legal sanctions, to minimize democratic accountability, to obscure moral responsibility. In short, Rodriguez's memoir must also serve as a cover story.

The genre of the cover story/memoir is not easily read or interpreted. If the agent/author is not to betray at least the first of his callings, he must leave out precisely the facts that would be most interesting. And if citizens/readers care to understand the full importance of the story for a democracy, they must try to fill in the blanks with information that the national security bureaucracy wants to keep secret. Thus the unique literary appeal of *Shadow Warrior*: it is least informative when it is obviously honest, and it is most interesting when it is entirely misleading.

In telling this story, is Rodriguez cynical or is he sincere? His book provides an unsettling portrait of the psyche of a covert operator. Rodriguez is clearly one of those men for whom deception and disclosure are the same. He knows full disclosure of his activities would compromise the heroic, patriotic image he seeks to protect. Yet it is equally clear that Rodriguez is incapable of imagining why it should. The bombastic naïveté of his subtitle makes him seem a little ominous.

Felix Rodriguez was born in 1941 into a comfortably middle-class Cuban family whose political allegiances extended to Fulgencio Batista. (Having mastered the clichés of his adopted country, however, Rodriguez writes that he opposes dictatorships of the left and right.) At 14 Felix was shipped to prep school outside of Philadelphia. In 1960 he skipped college to join nascent anti-Castro efforts in Miami. "I volunteered to assassinate Castro," he recalls cheerfully, "and the Americans took me up on it."

Soon he was employed by the Central Intelligence Agency, in whose ranks he met and befriended the likes of Rafael ("Chi Chi") Quintero and Rolando Martinez. Quintero (as Rodriguez fails to mention) went on to fame as a CIA hit man who in the 1970s agreed to assassinate a Libyan opponent of Muammar Qaddafi. Martinez (as Rodriguez acknowledges) was later immortalized as a Watergate "burglar." The quotation marks are Rodriguez's, and they are left unexplained.

After the Bay of Pigs fiasco, Rodriguez worked on various CIA sabotage missions in Cuba. In these matters Rodriguez the memoirist seems persuasive, not only about the nature of the operations, but also—inadvertently—about the self-deceptions of the operators. He discloses that, between 1963 and 1965, the CIA ran a huge (300 employees) and unsuccessful anti-Castro operation based in Somoza's Nicaragua; and then, a mere page after noting that the Cuban rebels were wholly funded by a foreign intelligence agency (the CIA), Rodriguez states proudly that "we were running a completely self-sufficient operation, put together from scratch."

Rodriguez's memories of the capture of Che Guevara in 1967 also ring true. He is generous with names and details, and his own range of emotions in confronting his enemy. Embracing Che, he says, "was a tremendously emotional moment for me. I no longer hated him. His moment of truth had come. . . . He was facing his death with courage and grace."

Rodriguez moved on to Vietnam, and there his narrative loses its vividness. In Saigon, it is the office, not the battlefield, that he seems to be most passionate about. His job was hunting down Viet Cong leaders, and he expresses great satisfaction in having killed large numbers of them. But his most discernible pleasures come in observing his superiors in the CIA food chain. They were, invariably, larger than life. One was "gloriously inventive," another had a "deep kindness," a third was "a tough as nails curmudgeon of a guy about 50 who avoided all the niceties of life." While often contemptuous of their clumsy gringo ways, Rodriguez clearly yearned for a place in their company.

The connections that Rodriguez made in Saigon delivered him to fame within two decades. The CIA station chief there was Theodore Shackley, who was the first person to suggest to Reagan administration officials that they make a secret deal for American hostages in Iran. Another one of Rodriguez's bosses was Donald Gregg, who later became the top foreign policy adviser to Vice President Bush and is now the ambassador to South Korea.

Rodriguez left Vietnam in 1972 because of a bad back, he says. He did a brief stint in Argentina and an intelligence gathering tour in the Caribbean. In 1976 he retired, and was awarded the Intelligence Star for Valor. And at this point in his telling of his life, the cover story takes over entirely from the memoir.

The reason is that in the late 1970s Rodriguez fell in with the gang of ne'er-do-wells swarming around Edwin Wilson. It wasn't an illogical choice. Rodriguez had aspirations to be a decision-maker, not just a soldier. He was recommended to Wilson by Shackley. Shackley, according to Peter Maas in *Manhunt*, was in line to become director of the CIA had Gerald Ford been elected president in 1976. Wilson was a powerful and respected figure in the intelligence community, directing major covert operations and hosting leading politicians at his estate in Virginia. What could go wrong?

Only a few details of this period can be made out in Rodriguez's narrative. Rodriguez acknowledges working for Wilson. He acknowledges meeting with Richard Secord, an old CIA hand, in the

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apartment of Thomas Clines, another associate of Wilson's. (Secord and Clines went on to fame for enriching themselves in the *contra* resupply operation.) Rodriguez also acknowledges working for Wilson in Lebanon as an adviser to the Christian militias. He mentions that his old friend Chi Chi Quintero was also working for Wilson. As Maas reported it, Quintero was hired to bump off one of Qaddafi's opponents. He backed out of the plot when he learned that the CIA had not authorized it.

Wilson, unfortunately, sold tons of the plastic explosive, favored by terrorists worldwide, to Qaddafi. When Wilson was caught, the whole crowd around him was discredited—though scarcely put out of business. Several, including Secord, were lucky not to go to jail themselves. Rodriguez insists that he "didn't know the whole picture—like the fact that Wilson had sold Qaddafi tons of C-4 plastic explosives." This may well be true. But what portion of the Wilson picture Rodriguez *did* know is something he never explains. And indeed, the purpose of these chapters of *Shadow Warrior* is to obscure the question. Rodriguez says only that in late 1979 he "cooled his friendships" with Clines and Quintero because "they had come to value money more than they did freedom and democratic principles."

Of most immediate interest, certainly, is Rodriguez's account of the Iran-*contra* affair. He says that he first went to Central America in 1980, because of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. "I felt compelled once again to become an active participant in the fight against communism." In 1980 and 1981 an Argentine general hired him as a "security consultant" in Central America. Rodriguez explains that the Argentineans "were having a problem with Cuban and Sandinista support for their pro-Marxists guerrillas. I was able to show them [the Argentineans] how to set up intelligence networks in Central America."

Maybe it was coincidence, but at the very time that Rodriguez was working for his unidentified Argentine general the Argentine military was exporting terrorism to Central America. The Argentine generals, who in the late 1970s waged a "dirty war" at home that killed at least 9,000 civilians, also established an intelligence operation in Central America. According to Argentine observers, several of the generals convicted of war crimes for running the dirty war were also in charge of running Central American operations. Craig Pyes and Laurie Becklund reported in the *Albuquerque Journal* in 1983 that the Argentine program included tracking down Argentine leftists who had escaped to Central America, conducting intelligence and advisory activities with regional anti-Communist groups, and directing sabotage and assassination missions against Nicaraguan and other leftist targets.

In El Salvador, the Argentine advisers worked in safe houses, provided by the Salvadoran National Guard and right-wing civilians, where "prisoners were interrogated, tortured, and executed," according to Pyes and Becklund.

Did Rodriguez assist in this program of state terror? Again, the cover story takes precedence over the memoir, and Rodriguez skimps on the details of his consultancy. He limits himself to saying that he helped the Argentineans keep "a close watch on events without attracting unwanted attention."

In any case, Rodriguez retained his ambitions to join the inner circle of covert action strategists. He remained in Central America throughout the early 1980s, traveling and peddling a proposal for rural counterinsurgency based on his experiences in Bolivia and Vietnam. He submitted it to various armed forces in the region, none of whom acted upon it. He also sent a copy through his old buddy Gregg in Vice President Bush's office. Gregg forwarded the plan to the National Security Council, where it languished in Oliver North's safe. By late 1984 Rodriguez had received no response, and complained he was frustrated by "watching from the sidelines."

What exactly are "the sidelines" for a shadow warrior? Rodriguez was living on his modest CIA pension and hanging around with people who were of no small interest to federal criminal prosecutors. According to interviews with Congressional investigators, he was working as a bodyguard for Sarkis Soghenalian, a Miami arms dealer now under indictment for selling 104 helicopters to Iraq in violation of an American arms embargo. Rodriguez was also in business with Gerard Latchinian, another arms dealer in Miami. Latchinian, now doing 30 years in jail for smuggling cocaine to fund an anti-Communist assassination plot in Honduras, says that he and Rodriguez sold munitions in Central America. (There is no evidence that Rodriguez knew about Latchinian's drug plot.) Rodriguez does not mention working with either Soghenalian or Latchinian in this period.

But Rodriguez's day was coming. The Reagan administration's reliance on covert action created job opportunities for thousands of operatives. A well-connected operator like Rodriguez, with a plausible scheme for attacking the Salvadoran resistance, naturally rose with the tide. Through Gregg's office, he eventually gained an audience with Vice President Bush in January 1985. The purpose of the meeting was to consider Rodriguez's plan for using the Salvadoran air force in the civil war. Bush seemed interested. He certainly didn't object.

Rodriguez's bureaucratic patrons continued to promote him and his plan. The Salvadorans got the hint and so did other policy-makers. When one State Department official noted that it might be illegal for Rodriguez, an American citizen, to fly combat missions in El Salvador, Rodriguez refused even to consult with a lawyer. "I believe what I'm going to do is legal," he said. Soon Rodriguez was whizzing above the Salvadoran countryside in a Huey helicopter, taking fire and tracking down leftist guerrillas.

In September 1985 Rodriguez received a single-spaced "Dear Felix" letter from North recruiting him to work on the *contra* aid network. "Since this is a completely compartmented operation being handled by the [*contra*] resistance," North wrote, "you are the only person in the area who can set-up the servicing of these aircraft" with top Salvadoran officials. He accepted North's assignment; but he pretends, for the sake of his cover story, that he was only a "part-timer" in the *contra* resupply operation. He suggests that he was mostly helping the Salvadorans fight that country's guerrillas resistance and had little time to assist the *contras*. "It is difficult to fight a day-in, day-out war against Communist guerrillas and find the time to do anything else, especially to coordinate a complicated resupply mission."

Rodriguez was, in fact, deeply and constantly involved in the *contra* resupply operation. According to documents uncovered by the Iran-*contra* investigating committees, he signed the orders sending loads of material to *contra* base camps. He paid the rent and the telephone bills of the crews. He arranged for the U.S. Embassy to fix up the houses where the crew members lived and had the houses linked up to the American Embassy's radio communication network. He hired additional staff. He once even ordered a pair of boots for a mechanic.

Rodriguez needs to downplay the fact that he was again working with his cronies from his Edwin Wilson days, with Quintero and Secord. He says he was "uneasy" about the association—but not that uneasy. Quintero, for example, asked Rodriguez to obtain "end-user" certificates (official documents that are worth millions of dollars to arms dealers

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like Secord) from his friends in the Salvadoran military. Rodriguez complied.

Moreover, Rodriguez acknowledges hiring another old friend from the CIA days to work in the *contra* aid network. This man's name was Luis Posada Carriles. Posada was on the lam from charges in Venezuela that he blew up a Cuban airliner in 1976, killing all 73 civilians aboard. Venezuelan officials have a wiretap recording of Posada telling an associate that he had pulled off the bombing. But Rodriguez says there is "no hard evidence" against Posada. On the suggestion of an unidentified friend, Rodriguez gave Posada a job helping the "freedom fighters."

Rodriguez's cover story/memoir is important, and utterly unpersuasive, for three reasons. First, as an advocate of covert activity, he hopes to justify the illegal *contra* resupply operation—and then he abandons the effort. Rodriguez concedes that he knew North's operation was illegal. He quotes a memo circulated to the U.S. Embassy forbidding all American officials from aiding the *contras*. When questioned by the Iran-*contra* committees in 1987, Rodriguez said that while North "controlled" the *contra* aid network, and while various other government officials worked on it, "I personally didn't believe that the government itself was involved." Rodriguez has now wisely retreated from this ridiculous position. "Whether or not Oliver North broke any laws," he murmurs, "is not for me to say."

Second, Rodriguez tries to distance his patrons Gregg and Bush from his own illicit activities. But again, when facts intrude, he retreats. Rodriguez has always said that he worked for a relative stranger, North, in El Salvador for 23 months before he told his friend Gregg anything about what he was doing. How plausible is this claim? In those 23 months, Gregg's top aide met with Rodriguez twice in San Salvador and once in Washington. Rodriguez also met three times with Bush himself. Rodriguez claims that he only discussed his efforts on behalf of the Salvadorans with the Vice President and his staff—and never mentioned *contra* resupply. Rodriguez might be given the benefit of the doubt, were it not for a note scrawled in a White House appointment book. Before one of the meetings between Rodriguez, Gregg, and the Vice President, a secretary wrote that the topic of the meetings was "*contra* resupply." In his Senate confirmation hearings, Gregg said with a straight face that she really meant to write "copter resupply." Rodriguez chooses not to explain the secretary's notation.

Finally, Rodriguez hopes to divert attention from the well-documented allegations that the *contras* and their suppliers were involved in drug trafficking. Again, the sheer volume of information, much of it generated by his own government, is against him. North's closest aide identified suspected *contra* drug traffickers in memos to his boss. According a report by Senator John Kerry, the U.S. Customs Service and the Drug Enforcement Administration had identified at least four firms under American contract to supply material to the *contras* as major narcotics traffickers—before the Reagan administration awarded them contracts. Earlier this year the Costa Rican police arrested John Hull, a known CIA operative who also worked in the *contra* aid network, for condoning drug flights to and from his ranch on the Nicaraguan border. The best Rodriguez can do about this indelicate matter is to suggest that allegations about American involvement in drug traffic were raised "by left-wing public interest groups," as if they are, for that reason, obviously false. He quotes himself telling Kerry, "Senator, you know there is a disinformation apparatus within the Soviet and Cuban intelligence services; it is in the best interests of the Soviets and the Cubans that the Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters do not prevail."

A final judgment of Felix Rodriguez the "CIA hero" turns on larger political and historical questions. Most of the major national security operations on which he worked have failed: the Bay of Pigs, the Vietnam War, the *contra* war. None of these failures have much affected American security. All did more damage to American democracy than the putative enemy. It will be argued that Rodriguez's career is defensible, even admirable, because his actions were intended to defend American values. In the book's final paragraphs, Rodriguez dedicates his life to his adopted country, pledging, "I will stand firm to my last breath to protect your values."

But *Shadow Warrior* makes clear what Rodriguez thinks of American values. Operationally, they are a luxury that secret agents, and Americans in general, cannot afford when venturing out into the world. "We expect everything to be done on our timetable and done with the same values that we apply back in Washington, or Miami, or New York. . . . That's not the way it works. Whether you are a CIA agent or a tourist, you have to learn to shed the rigidity that most Americans carry with them," he teaches. Rodriguez himself has certainly learned to shed—and not only overseas. He expresses few regrets about a career dedicated to friendship and/or professional cooperation with an assassin (Quintero), a group of convicted war criminals (the Argentine generals), a future cocaine importer (Latchinian), a political burglar (Martinez), a convicted prevaricator (North), a terrorist bomber (Posada), and a diverse collection of war profiteers (Wilson, Secord, and Soghenalian). No excesses of rigidity here.

Some will find in *Shadow Warrior* confirmation of Edwin's Wilson judgment of its author: "He's a stupid guy but he sure liked war." Others will come away equally convinced that Rodriguez is, as his publishers claim, a "powerfully courageous super patriot." Perhaps all can agree that superpatriotism is the last refuge of a superscoundrel.

JEFFERSON MORLEY is Washington editor of the *Nation*.

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

incomes to fall. To eliminate the trade deficit without impoverishing ourselves, we need government action to improve our industrial competitiveness, as well as open up closed foreign markets.

ROBERT A. BLECKER
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

TRB used the word "disincrute," as in "If anyone can disincrute the Japanese, it's Jim Fallows." I can't find it in our office dictionary. Please define; I hate to think of what is happening to the Japanese in the meantime.

CHRISTINE ROUSE
San Francisco, California

TRB replies:

It was supposed to be "disinscrute," but that's not in the dictionary either.

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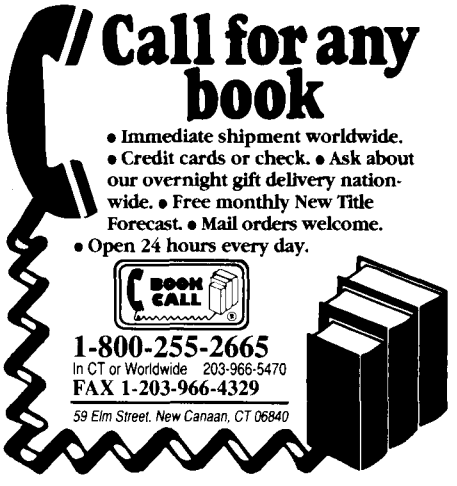

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

War stories

GLORY, THE NEW MOVIE MADE much of in this issue of THE NEW REPUBLIC, is very much worth making much of. I went to see it the other afternoon at the cozy screening room of the Motion Picture Association of America; my excuse was that I had to make sure we wouldn't regret featuring it on our cover. I needn't have worried. When the picture was over everyone in my row sat silently, looking straight ahead, until the very end of the long crawl of credits—not because we absolutely needed to know who was the gaffer and who the unit publicist, but because it took us that long to recover our composure. Bring a handkerchief. You'll need one. *Glory* is emotionally overpowering. It's brilliant propaganda—not in the pejorative modern sense of the term but in its original 17th-century Curial meaning: material that propagates and strengthens the faith. In this case the faith is America's civil religion, from which blacks, whose roots in this country go back further on average than those of whites, have mostly been excluded. The conventional patriotic pageant of bewigged Founding Fathers, brave frontiersmen, freedom-seeking immigrants, and so forth, has a way of leaving blacks out except as attendants or victims, objects of oppression or compassion. *Glory*, if it reaches the audience it deserves, will go far toward changing that. Unlike *Gone with the Wind*, that grand, mendacious soap opera, and unlike *Mississippi Burning*, which was a tissue of lies from beginning to end, *Glory* is essentially faithful to the events from which it draws its inspiration and its moral power. (See "The 'Glory' Story" by James M. McPherson, page 22.) Movies by their nature cannot prove historical truths, but if they are as conscientiously made as this one, they can illustrate them. *Glory* illustrates several truths, among them that the Civil War was a revolutionary war, that black soldiers were freedom fighters in that war, and that they were all the more heroic because they not only fought but had to fight to fight. *Glory* puts black fighters at the heart of the nation-building struggle for liberty that is the motif of our (truthful) national mythology. This could do more to alleviate the alienation of young blacks from the "mainstream" than any amount of the sort of curricular victimology described elsewhere in these pages by Scott McConnell and Eric Breindel ("Inclusion Illusion," page 18). The creators of *Glory* are something rarer than good filmmakers. They are useful citizens.

THE DRUG WAR, ON THE OTHER hand, is a counterrevolutionary war. At least that's how William Bennett, the Drug Czar, seems to see it. Bennett is one of the few neoconservatives who still retains his late '70s-early '80s zest for the Kulturkampf against the counterculture, or whatever the current term of art is for hippies, ex-anti-war protesters, New Left academics, pot smokers, sentimental liberals, Third World apologists, and the rest of the whole hazy late '60s-early '70s bag that now seems good for nothing except providing fodder for promotional announcements on VH-1. Bennett gave a speech the other day at Harvard, in the Kennedy School auditorium, giving his arguments against drug legalization. What gave the speech its pep, though, were Bennett's sneering attacks on those he called, serially, "the intellectuals," "prominent residents of Princeton, Madison, Cambridge, or Palo Alto," "our civil libertarians," "armchair critics," "elite circles," "the liberal intellectuals," "pundits and academic cynics," "America's deep thinkers," and "whole cadres of social scientists, abetted by whole armies of social workers." And why have these people failed, in Bennett's phrase, "to get with the program"? Here's why: "Their hostility to the national war on drugs is, I think, partly rooted in a general hostility to law enforcement and criminal justice." Also, they are unable to accept that "not all crusades led by the United States Government, enjoying broad popular support, are brutish, corrupt, and sinister." This is red meat, but it has been left too long unrefrigerated. It should be thoroughly cooked before ingesting. Earth to Drug Czar: the '60s are over. Anyway, the political agenda of the drug war is pretty clear. Since for demographic reasons drug use has been declining since 1985, and since the drug war's announced goals for reducing it further are actually higher than projections from present trends, it will be possible to announce an interim victory in time for the 1992 elections even if drug use by then is higher than it would have been if there had been no drug war. Meanwhile the pundits and academic cynics will have taken a good demagogic licking, even if, like the drug dealers, we keep on ticking.

WHEN IT COMES TO DESTROYING the morale of Woodstock Nation retreads, however, Bennett is too literal-minded to be truly effective. He should take lessons from Lee Atwater, who takes a subtler, more insidious approach. At Anton's 1201 Club a few nights ago, I happened to be in attendance when the chairman of the Republican National Committee played, sang, jumped, and shouted his way through three hours of excellent rhythm and blues. The only dissonance was cognitive. Atwater, on lead guitar, fronted a mostly black band of first-rate studio musicians plus three female back-up singers, the R&B vocalist Chuck Jackson, and, on keyboards, the great Isaac Hayes. It is my duty to report that Atwater's guitar playing was not in the least disgraceful, and that on a slow blues number of his own composition he played a long solo that, while of course derivative, was startlingly good. His singing wasn't bad, either; I've heard far worse from heavy metal bands that regularly fill stadiums. Atwater's uninhibited exuberance contrasted markedly with the stiff immobility of his overwhelmingly white, overwhelmingly Republican audience. Pearls before swine was the phrase that kept coming to mind.

FOR ME THIS EVENT—IT WAS SOME sort of RNC Christmas party—was an exercise in masochism, if masochism is a painful experience that yields pleasure. The pleasure came from the music. The pain came from the fact of who was playing it. Atwater cannot be dismissed as just another Southern fraternity boy who likes black R&B; his knowledge of the music is too deep for that. "When it comes to white boys," Isaac Hayes said from the stage, "I thought the British had a monopoly on knowledge of black American music—until I met Lee Atwater." Given Atwater's race-baiting political record, from Strom Thurmond to Willie Horton, Hayes's presence constituted a prima facie Faustian bargain (though he assured me afterward he has not become a Republican). The unpalatable fact, however, is that a major political party has finally gotten around to picking a leader who has something resembling a '60s sensibility—and that party isn't the Democrats. Nor is Atwater's connection to the counterculture through the music alone—the music we always thought the man couldn't bust. There's a political resonance, too. "Bullshit permeates everything," Atwater once said. This remains his most obviously genuine statement about the substance (as opposed to the tactics) of politics. The Republican national chairman isn't really a Republican at all. Like many militants of the self-proclaimed "revolutionary" left of 20-odd years ago, he's a nihilist. He is most definitely *not* a useful citizen. Yet I can't dislike him the way I ought to, because he plays good guitar licks, and because he is using his political prominence to live out a splendid fantasy.

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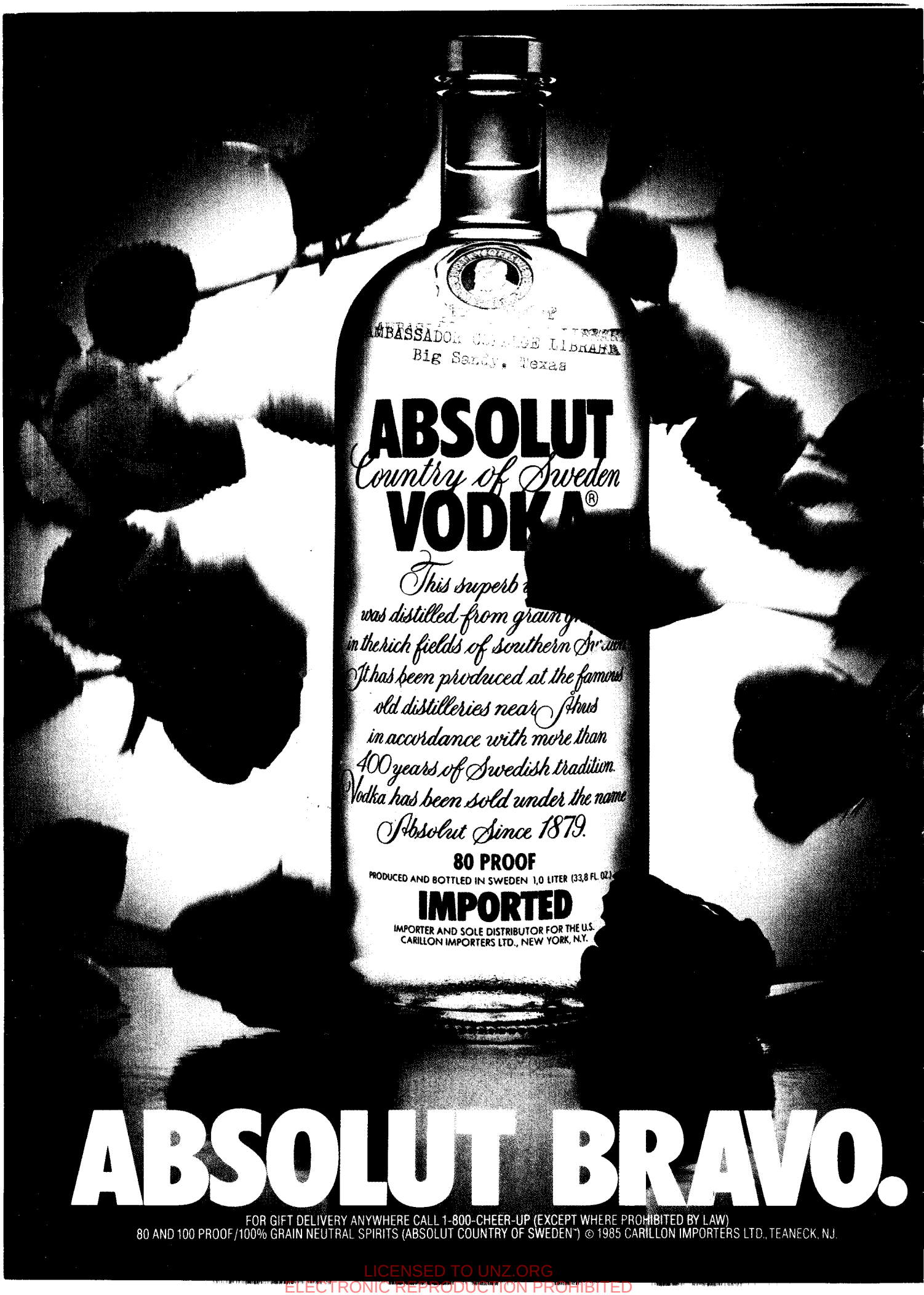
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